SANDWELL

thechronicle

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AN EDITION OF THE SANDWELL AND GREAT BARR CHRONICLE

Grandad's delight at U-turn over cancer drug – see page 2

From a West Bromwich pub to Queen of the Playboy Mansion – see page 11

Triumphant debut for Black Country rock supergroup – see page 18

Meter mistakes to be ploughed back into better parking facilities

PARKING fees paid mistakenly into meters on Sandwell Council-owned car parks in the run-up to Christmas will be ploughed back into improving facilities it has been promised by the authority.

Council leader Darren Cooper said the council could not calculate how many drivers had paid unnecessarily while car parks were free from December 11 to Christmas day, in a move to encourage shoppers across the borough.

He added: "Free car parking in the run-up to Christmas was introduced to help people during a busy time when people would be out in shopping centres more than normal.

"The free two week period was well advertised in local newspapers and signs were put up in car parks detailing the free period. "However, we cannot legislate for people who for reasons unto themselves carried on paying.

Lowest

"It has not been possible at this stage to work out how many people paid unnecessarily, but it should be recognised that we have some of the lowest parking charges in the West Midlands.

"Other local authorities have continued to charge and some at up to £5 a day. We have never tried to fleece people with parking charges and that is reflected in the fees that we do charge in normal periods. All money that is collected helps the council with improving and enhancing car park facilities across the borough."

Sandwell's cabinet member for safer neighbourhoods, Councillor Derek Rowley, added: "We are not raising car parking charges at all this year at car parks.

"Ours are on average 52 per cent lower than anywhere else in the Black Country, and we don't charge for Sunday parking."

HISTORIC SMETHWICK ENGINE WILL BE RESTORED

COUNCIL IN BID TO SELL OFF LOCO

HISTORIC railway engine the Sandwell Locomotive is on track to be sold off in a controversial move by Sandwell Council.

The engine, which cost Sandwell Council £23,000 in 1989 to promote the borough, is being lined up for sale to the highest bidder, provided they can guarantee to restore the engine to its former glory.

The locomotive was built at the Birmingham Railway and Carriage Works in Smethwick and bought by the council to run trips for children and pensioners.

However, running costs escalated and

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the council is now planning a sale. The asking price has not been disclosed.

Councillor Ann Shackleton, cabinet member for youth, culture and leisure said: "The Sandwell locomotive was built in Smethwick and is an important part of our industrial and railway heritage and we are determined to ensure its future.

"It is currently based at Kidderminster under the care of the Severn Valley Railway but it needs full restoration.

"We are going to look for a buyer who can guarantee they will restore the engine to its former glory and maintain it."

Preserved

The move has angered councillors who campaigned for its purchase in the 1980s and believe it is a vital part of Black Country history.

Councillor Roger Horton campaigned for the locomotive to be bought by the council more than 20 years ago.

He said: "There was so much support when it came to buying the engine. It is a part of the living history of the Black Country and it should be preserved.

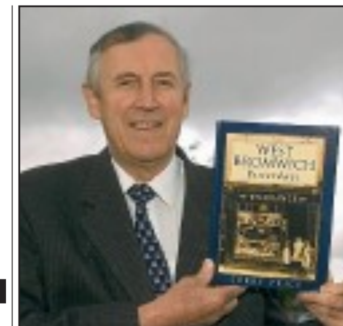
"Lots of families here have connections with the Birmingham Railway and Carriage Works, which employed thousands and this engine is very important to them.

"I would not support any plan to sell it off.

"We could consider setting up a support group to campaign to save the engine and to support its maintenance, if this is what the council plans."

Built in the 1960s, the Sandwell Locomotive is a class 27 diesel locomotive, which saw service in Scotland.

It was moved to the Birmingham Railway Museum in Tyseley and then to the Severn Valley Railway in the 1990s.



Historian Terry Price with a copy of his hugely successful book West Bromwich Yesterdays

Nostalgic book of old photos is a big success

WEST Bromwich historian Terry Price's latest book of old photographs of the town has been a sell out success.

All 2,500 hardback copies of the nostalgic collection West Bromwich Yesterdays have been sold just a couple of months after the launch – and the author reckons The Chronicle played a major role in its success.

Collection

"When the article (about the book) appeared in The Sandwell and Great Barr Chronicle the 'phone didn't stop ringing," said Terry.

Those with a copy of the book, featuring photos from Terry's own collection and those sent in by readers, should treasure it because the author has no plans for a reprint despite its huge success.

New jobs at recycle plant

A RECYCLING plant for electrical and electronic equipment will create up to 15 jobs in Oldbury.

Enablelink Ltd has been given the go-ahead to expand its existing business in Parsonage Road, Oldbury.

Firm director Burt Stanley said the move will create seven jobs at first but could create a further eight jobs within six months if the firm grows as anticipated.

Planning chiefs at Sandwell Council have given the application the green light recycle parts from household white goods as well as to process scrap at the existing plant.

Three town walk

SANDWELL Ramblers take on a 16-mile walk around the borough on Sunday but those wishing to walk a smaller distance can drop out at five, eight or 12 miles.

The three town walk sets off from Tamebridge railway station at 8.30am. For further details contact Peter Figg on 01922 496686.

Transformation of old tower blocks continues

THE £2.8 million transformation of a run-down tower block in West Bromwich has been completed.

Three new flats were built on the ground floor of Lissimore House, Kenrick Park, including one with wheelchair access, under the scheme. A new roof was added and the front entrance and lobby remodelled.

The revamp was part of the multi-million pound Decent Homes Programme to modernise homes across the country, the future of which is in limbo.

Sandwell Homes investment director John Clayton said: "The estate was badly in need of refurbishment. Delivering the Decent Homes programme to the six blocks has transformed it into an area where people want to live."

Lifts

The extensive facelift also saw lifts replaced, double glazing installed and overcladding added to balconies.

Landscaping will now finish transforming the estate, to include improved car parking, paving, seated areas and better lighting.

Works have been completed at Greenford House and Mountford House, West Bromwich, including turning unused store sheds into flats.

Mr Clayton added: "Work has now started on Kenrick House, the last of the blocks on the Kenrick Park estate, which has six high-rise blocks housing nearly 400 tenants between them."

Refurbishments are under way at Wyndmill Crescent and include building flats in disused basements of the blocks to get as many people as possible off the 8,000 waiting list for housing.

The £2.75 million facelift of Nelson House, a 50-year-old condemned block of flats on Upper Church Lane, Princes End, Tipton, will also take place.

Work on campus is going to plan

WORK on a £30 million 'super school' in Rowley Regis is running to schedule with the first pupils set to move in within two months.

The creation of the Rowley Learning Campus, which will see two schools and a pupil referral unit move onto a site in Hawes Lane, Rowley Regis, is almost complete. The first of the 1,650 students and staff will move in during February.

The students will be from Westminster Special School, in West Bromwich, and Whiteheath Pupil Referral Unit in Throne Road, Rowley Regis. Students and staff from St Michael's Business Enterprise College, will move in during June.

Councillor Darren Cooper, Sandwell Council Leader said: "Phase one at Rowley is on schedule and pupils from the Westminster Special School and the Whiteheath Pupil Referral Unit will move in as planned in February. The plan for the Westminster School in West Bromwich is that it will be used as temporary accommodation while the Woden Rise Pupil Referral Unit is completed and then the site may be sold off."

Woden Rise will eventually become part of the Wednesbury Learning Campus, with Wodensborough Community Technology College.

Tributes to cricket club's past chairman

TRIBUTES have been paid to the former chairman of Smethwick Cricket Club.

Former Mitchells & Butlers and Smethwick batsman John Lumb died at Heartlands Hospital in Birmingham on Christmas Day, aged 65.

Son Matthew Lumb, 39, of Sutton Coldfield, said his father, a former teacher, of Wylde Green, was originally from Doncaster. He moved to Birmingham in 1969. Mr Lumb had a degree in economics and later taught the subject at Great Barr Secondary School. He had a 30-year association with Smethwick Cricket Club, joining in the early 1970s.

Matthew said: "Dad was the leading scorer in the league in 1971. He moved on to play for and captain Smethwick for many years and they won the Challenge Cup in 1976. "Later he became chairman of Smethwick, a post he held for a number of years and also served on the Birmingham League Committee."

Mr Lumb leaves his wife Gillian, aged 66, children Matthew, Rebecca and Hannah, , and three young grandsons. Mr Lumb's funeral will be held at Sutton Coldfield Crematorium at noon on January 12.

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Fundraising for parade

A FUNDRAISING drive for £10,000 has been launched for the St George's Day event in Sandwell, being held on April 24.

It is hoped the event will attract more than 20,000 people. Last year's march through West Bromwich on April 25 had to be self-funded because Sandwell Council has a new meaning it will not contribute funds to externally-organised parades.

Mark Cowles, of Stone Cross St George Association, which organises the event, said £700 had already been raised for this year's event at Yew Tree Social Club.

"It is definitely going to go ahead and we are in the process of setting up a meeting with the council. It is going to be Sunday, April 24," he said."We are now on a fundraising drive to get people to donate but we would like to thank people who have already supported us including Inspired Personnel, Webbs of Wednesbury funeral directors, S&L Haulage and the Steadfast Trust."

In 2009 the parade was saved with a donation from West Bromwich businessman Chris Kelly, of transport firm Keltruck.

Anyone who with donations towards the event should email stge orgeparade@aol.com.

Tribute project help call

PEOPLE behind a war memorial want donations for their new projects.

The Wednesbury War Memorial Group needs £5,000 so it can create 3,000 booklets plus a remembrance book. Like the new war memorial, in Walsall Road, the booklets and remembrance book will feature 1,060 soldiers' names from the First and Second World Wars. These include 385 forgotten heroes uncovered during five years of research by the group.

"We have £2,000 of our own funding so we (have) a large chunk of it," said researcher Fred Barnfield.

Cuts

"With the cuts, we realise Sandwell Council might not be able to help us. So we'd be really grateful for any support the public can give us."

The memorial was completed and unveiled in October after five years of campaigning.

Museum hours to be slashed

OPENING hours at museums in part of the Black Country will be cut as part of a cost-saving programme.

A review of historic buildings such as Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery and West Bromwich's Oak House is being carried out.

New recommendations will be put to Sandwell Council in February.

A plan presented to the council's cabinet says that changes are necessary to reflect the cash available to provide services. This is despite plans to invest heavily in improvements to the buildings themselves. It is not yet clear what the impact will be on jobs.

The report will also prioritise events by looking at those with the most number of visitors. Any proposed changes will be brought in during the financial year 2011/12.

A number of areas of the youth, culture and leisure department are currently under the microscope after it was revealed Sandwell Council needs to make £75 million of savings over the next four years.

Libraries could be closed and staff made redundant in a bid to save almost £1m, with job losses, closures and reduced opening hours all options on the table.

Invest

Despite this the authority said it is continuing to invest in leisure and culture facilities using grants from outside bodies – and says multi-million pound investments in leisure and culture facilities in Sandwell are expected to attract a million extra visitors to the borough a year.

The council is spending millions on new leisure centres and libraries, and on restoring tourist attractions.

Keith Heyes, head of cultural services at the council, said: "Over the last five years we have had a string of projects up to 2014 which we are going to be developing over an eight-year period. There will be £61m capital investment in those facilities.

"What we have been very successful in doing is getting money from outside the council, Heritage Lottery Funding or other key partners, and there is a particular focus on West Bromwich," he added.

"We hope the investment will attract around a million more visitors a year."

Projects include a new £13m pool in West Bromwich, which is to be at the junction of Moor Street and Bromford Lane, and a new £8.8m swimming centre in Tipton at the junction of Alexandra Road and Thursfield Road

The historic Oak House in Oak Road, West Bromwich is also undergoing a £2m revamp which will include a new education centre.

A 30ft-high zip wire is planned for Sandwell Valley, and the new £1.9m Blackheath Library and Oldbury's £6m library and office complex are both almost complete.

Homes scheme on track

WORK is on track to complete a £33 million council housing development in Sandwell in time to welcome tenants in February.

The development is being constructed at the site of former tower block Bearwood House in Bearwood Road, Smethwick, and will see 28 properties built on the site of the block demolished in 2008. The homes, opposite Victoria Park, will be available for rent. The development will include 17 flats and 11 houses and is being built by Lovell Partnerships Ltd.

Popular group

A HISTORY group in West Bromwich is more popular than ever.

The West Bromwich Local History Society, which has been running since 2002, now has some 50 members. But group chairman Moreen Wilkes says more people are still welcome.

Meetings take place on the the first Friday of each month at All Saints Church in Newton Road.

Annual membership costs £10. Concessions are available. Call (0121) 5883 879.

History of strike told

THE history of the chainmakers strike will be retold during a discussion at a library.

Author Tony Barnsley has recounted the circumstances leading up to the strike in his book called Breaking Their Chains: Chainmaker's Strike of 1910.

He will host the event at the Shenstone Theatre on floor seven of Halesowen Library, in the Cornbow Centre, on January 19. Doors open at 2pm for a 2.30pm start. Admission is £1.

Grandad's delight at cancer drug U-turn

A GRANDFATHER from Wednesbury is looking forward to the new year with fresh hope after winning a battle for £28,000 funding to help fight his brain tumour.

Keith Walker, aged 52, suffers from acromegaly, a rare tumour on his pituitary gland that will affect his internal organs, develop cancers and cause his bones to grow if left untreated.

He had been told by health bosses at Sandwell Primary Care Trust (PCT) that it was too expensive to pay for a drug called Pegvisomant.

But doctors said the drug would help keep his condition under control.

Following a campaign supported by more than 2,000 people, health chiefs have now made a U-turn and agreed to grant Mr Walker £28,000.

It will allow him to have up to 10mg of the Pegvisomant drug, which it is hoped will shrink the tumour.

Mr Walker, who lives with his partner Elaine Collins and her daughter Gemma at Queen Street, said: "They rang me to say they're now going to award me the funding. It was like a massive weight off my shoulders."

Among Mr Walker's supporters is Councillor Elaine Costigan, who represents the Wednesbury North ward on Sandwell Council. She met with health bosses to urge them to reconsider their position.

Mr Walker described her as the "backbone" of the campaign and said her support had been "amazing".

Cllr Mrs Costigan said: "It will make his life so much better. We're cock-a-hoop, it's the best news in the world."

Mr Walker was diagnosed at Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital in October 2006 and had surgery around Christmas 2007.

A five-week course of radiotherapy, five days a week, followed but the condition still caused his hands grow larger, as well as making his bottom jaw protrude.

Headaches

Mr Walker suffers regular headaches and had go to hospital for injections but the new medication could end the frequent trips.

He said: "It will add years on to my life and hopefully I will get to see my two grandchildren grow up."

Keith Walker celebrates at his workplace in Wolverhampton

Estate HQ for tenants

A £210,000 office for Tipton tenants running their own estate will open soon.

Work is under way at the site of the Boscobel Tenant Management Organisation's new office. The Park Lane HQ will open this month and will act as a point of contact for residents of the estate to pass on any concerns to the tenants organisation.

Pensioners living on the once-troubled estate have taken control of the area via Boscobel Tenants Management Organisation, meaning the estate of 128 homes is now independent of council control.

Councillor Simon Hackett, Sandwell Council cabinet member for housing, said: "This is something that tenants can ask to do, using legislation in the Housing Acts usually known as 'the right to manage'.

"Part of the legislation in right to manage requires the council to provide an office base for the new organisation."

New library to open soon

BLACKHEATH'S £1.9 million library will open its doors by the end of January.

The new building, on High Street will provide new library facilities as well as new offices for Black Country Housing Group.

Construction work on the library, which will be set over two floors started in February 2010 and is a joint project between Sandwell Council and the housing group.

Sandwell libraries have seen major investment in recent years. Oldbury has had a £6 million new library which will open in the New Year and the new Great Bridge Library re-opened in July, following an eight month £750,000 refurbishment.

Despite the recent investment the council is now reviewing the service in a bid to save £1 million from its annual budget.

Plans to be considered include closing or reducing opening hours at underused sites.

More dentists

NEW NHS dental practices are opening in Tipton.

The Oasis Dental Practice opened last month at 1 Owen Street and Primecare Oral Health Services Limited is opening Bridge Park Dental Practice at Unit 12, Great Bridge Street, this month. Call 0845 155 0500 to find an NHS dentist.

Lane closures on main road

A MAJOR route through Oldbury will be subject to lane closures during red route work. Part of A457 Oldbury Road will be shut between Oldbury Road Industrial Estate and Mallin Street to January 17.

Staff help charities

A VISIT from Father Christmas at Sandwell Homes raised £300 for charity. Chief executive Paul Field visited workers dressed as Santa at Oldbury. Staff held a raffle and tombola with proceeds to Wednesbury Animal Sanctuary, Huntingdon's Chorea and Macmillan Nurses.

New party planned

THE name of a new political group in Sandwell which is being formed by the borough's former Conservative group leader will be the Traditional Conservative Party.

Tony Ward, an independent councillor representing the Charlemont with Grove Vale ward, said he was just weeks away from launching the party and was hoping to field two candidates in May elections.

Mr Ward has sent four proposals for party names to Sandwell Council but the Traditional Conservative Party was his firm favourite.

He said: "I have always been a Tory. However, I do not like the way the Tory group is being run in Sandwell andnd I'm embarrassed by some of the national party's policies. I think the way the Government is cutting the armed forces is despicable. I really feel that someone needs to stand up and be counted.

"The Labour group here does not do a bad job. But there is still a lot they are not doing right. I don't think education is being looked at in the right way."

Tony Ward was replaced by Councillor Ray Nock as leader of the opposition group, after a vote at the party annual meeting in May.

Man who stole from his mother faces jail

A THIEF is facing jail after stealing £15,000 of his mother's jewellery to buy cocaine and towards paying for a flat.

Rakesh Klair stole his mother's gold and pawned it, Warley Magistrates Court was told.

Klair admitted theft and fraud. He had claimed he was selling his own property over the course of 17 visits to the Money Shop in West Bromwich's High Street.

Mr Kulbir Paul, prosecuting, said Klair stole the jewellery from his mother Harpal Kaur of Denbigh Drive, West Bromwich, where they were living together. Klair's haul included three children's bangles, two adult bangles, five chains, five pairs of earrings and 12 rings.

Empty

"Mrs Kaur went to get something from her cabinet and found her jewellery box was empty," Mr Paul said.

"She confronted her son and he said he had stolen it and he would get it back within a couple of weeks."

The Money Shop said in a statement that Klair had beem paid £6,000 for the jewellery after he signed a disclaimer saying it was his.

Magistrate Mrs Jane Rashid told Klair: "At the moment you are looking at a custodial sentence."

The case was adjourned for reports and Klair was bailed.

Praise for lifesavers

THE mother of a West Bromwich man whose life was saved by medics who braved a blizzard in order to deliver crucial equipment has given staff an emotional thank you.

Diane McDermott, of Bromford Lane, said without the breathing equipment her son Carl, in a serious condition with swine flu and pneumonia, may have died.

Mrs McDermott is looking after 35-year-old Carl's three young children while he is in Birmingham's City Hospital, where he has been since December 16.

Diane, who is looking after Carl's daughters Charli, aged six, and Katie, five, as well as son Darren, said: "The ambulance staff are doing a brilliant job. They kept him alive and that's how he's still here with us. I need to thank them whatever the outcome. I think they deserve the recognition for the brilliant job they have done."

Ambulance

Carl had managed to call an ambulance despite drifting in and out of consciousness. Diane, aged 58, added: "When they first picked him up they told me he had practically no oxygen in him from his illness and he only had an hour or two."

The ambulance crew had a five-hour journey in blizzard conditions to fetch an oscillator to help with breathing, from Coventry's Walsgrave Hospital, and needed a police escort after getting stuck on the M6.

"But the oscillator has helped him stay with us this long and we are hoping now," added Diane.

Bid for more funding

A £1 million lottery bid is being prepared for the complete renovation of West Bromwich's 13th Century Grade One listed Manor House.

The project, which got under way a year ago, currently has a budget of just over £300,000 but talks with lottery bosses have taken place over getting more cash.

Council officers said that informal talks with the Heritage Lottery Fund had gone extremely well and work is beginning on a formal bid for cash.

The building, in Hall Green Road, has been described as one of the borough's most important heritage sites. Ambitious plans to bring the former pub back to life as a heritage centre, museum and wedding venue are already on the table.

Play project at park

NEW sports pitches, trampolines and table tennis tables could be introduced at West Bromwich's Dartmouth Park as part of a £6.3 million improvement plan.

It is hoped the facilities will be put in ready for the summer holidays.

John Satchwell, Dartmouth Park project officer, said: "New features currently being discussed include toddler swings, a Viking swing, outdoor table tennis, outdoor table football, trampolines, a basket swing, a new toddler play unit, additional climbing unit for older children and a new interactive water splash pad.

"It is hoped that the play area will be improved before the summer of 2011, with the interactive splash pad completed the following year."

Fuel site is set to expand

A WEST Bromwich petrol station will be demolished and rebuilt to four times bigger, creating 10 new jobs.

Architects have mapped out the expansion of Pylon Services Station, on Walsall Road, which will see the existing sales building razed to the ground and replaced with a bigger convenience store.

A new jet wash bay will also be built under plans, with a new 70,000 litre petrol storage tank underground so the station can provide more varities of fuel. The design includes a new forecourt and six extra parking spaces.

Resubmitted

Plans have been returned by Sandwell planning chiefs as there was an outstanding fee for an application for planning permission but station owner Charlie Singh said the plans would be resubmitted.

Mr Singh, who has run the station for the past eight years, said: "I will speak to the architects and we will iron out any problems with the application. These plans are definitely going to happen, we've been here eight years and if you're going to survive as an independent shop you've got to expand."

Store plans go back to the drawing board

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A MULTI-MILLION pound scheme to expand Asda in Oldbury has been scrapped.

It had been proposed to extend the front of the Wolverhampton Road-based branch by 11,840 sq ft. The scheme would have created 50 jobs and menat 170 extra parking spaces.

A new petrol station and ambulance base were also set to be built on a 13-acre site next to the store.

But Asda say the scheme has fallen through and the supermarket giant now hopes to have completed revised plans for a different scheme by April.

Asda spokesman Avnish Raichura said: "It was a really long time ago when we proposed this and things have moved on since then.

"The staff and customers want something different now so we're going back to the drawing board."

Mr Raichura would not say what had led the store to drop the plans, which were first revealed a year ago.

It is understood it is connected with West Midlands Ambulance Service's withdrawal from the scheme for financial reasons.

It would have cost the trust about £4 million to build a new ambulance base on the site but trust spokesman Suzie Fothergill said they had decided it would be more economical to spend £500,000 extending the current ambulance base in Oldbury.

Mr Raichura declined to say what elements of the Asda expansion scheme were being revised.

Improve

But he insisted the store was still keen on some sort of extension which would allow for wider aisles and an expansion of the George clothing range.

"Asda Oldbury still has aspirations to improve," he said. "We are amending the proposal outlined some time ago in response to customer feedback and will announce new plans shortly."

Proposals to build an Asda Living store in Wednesbury, which would have created 90 jobs, were scrapped last year.

The store was to open on Gallagher Retail Park but the long-awaited scheme fell through due to problems over the lease.

Speaking about the latest blow, Sandwell Council's jobs and economy boss, Councillor Ian Jones, said: "It is disappointing because I think it would have boosted the area. Hopefully the revised plans will contain the same job promises as the original scheme."

Metal raider's £900 fines are written off by court

A METAL raider caught red-handed in Tipton had more than £900 of unpaid fines written off and given 80 hours of unpaid work to make a "fresh start".

Jamie Malpass was caught holding copper piping when he and brother-in-law Andrew Buckler were found at the disused Bonner Regis site in High Street, Princes End.

Warley Magistrates Court heard how the pair went into the site on November 16 via a removed rear door because two men, claiming they were clearing the site, told them to take what they wanted.

Malpass, of Beddows Avenue in Coseley, and Buckler, of Wednesfield Road, Willenhall, thought they could make cash selling the scrap but did not know an alarm had been triggered. Miss Pushpa Sheemar, prosecuting, said police found Malpass and Buckler with piping in their hands. Malpass, 26, admitted burglary with intent to steal.

Mr Chris Stapleton, defending, said: "Mr Malpass has constantly stated he was walking along and saw two people carrying piping who said help yourselves. He had found himself in a dire situation, his finances were very bad and he wasn't being allowed to see his children by his partner." He added that Malpass had fully co-operated with police.

The court heard Malpass had broken a community order and needed to complete 120 hours unpaid work and pay £1,319 in costs, fines and compensation.

Chairman of the bench Mrs Glenise Edwards said she would remitoldest fines for a total of £903. "This is your chance for a fresh start," she said. Malpass was given another 12-month community order with supervision and 80 hours unpaid work to run consecutively with his outstanding order. Earlier this month co-accused Buckler was given a 12-month community order with 80 hours unpaid work, plus £85 prosecution costs.

Recycle cards

Duncan MacNichol, from Sainsbury's Oldbury, wants shoppers to recycle their old Christmas cards by placing them in the green box at the store

CUSTOMERS at Oldbury's Sainsbury's store are being invited to bring in their old Christmas cards now the festive season is over.

A recycling box will be in the foyer of the supermarket until Tuesday, January 11 for shoppers.

The green box has been a fixture in the store after Christmas for the last three years and deputy manager Tim Morgan-Fletcher said it will be filled around three times before mid-January.

All the cards will then be recycled along with waste from the store.

Mr Morgan-Fletcher said: "We create huge amounts of paper and plastic on a daily basis, which is baled and sent for recycling. This sometimes even comes back to the store as things such as plastic bags.

"People are recycling a lot more now than they were, say 20 years ago, and they expect us as a supermarket to do the same. It is only right that we play our part and offer these facilities."

Council staff to get 'hot desking'

PLANS to introduce 'hot desking' for staff at Sandwell Council look set to be accelerated in a bid to save cash.

The authority needs to save £75 million over the next four years and is planning on making savings by closing offices.

The council's finance boss has now said the introduction of an 'agile' working scheme, which would involve getting rid of individual desks to instead allow office employees to work from any desk at the authority's sites, or even from home, would be starting imminently.

And one of the first locations to take up the scheme will be Oldbury's new £6 million library and office space Jack Judge House, which is due to open next month.

Councillor Steve Eling, cabinet member for strategic resources at Sandwell Council, said: "At the moment I am looking to accelerate how quickly we are looking to introduce hot desking in order to realise savings sooner than later.

"We will be rolling it out so in time it should be available to everyone who is office based, but in order to make it work we have got to have this system where people log into the phone with their own number, so we have got to upgrade phone systems to make it work."

In April the authority announced it was looking to close a third of offices with outdated offices sold off and rented accommodation vacated.

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Trainee minister dies

Paul Beesley – ex-teacher collapsed

A FORMER teacher from Wednesbury died after collapsing while collecting his son from primary school.

Trainee Baptist minister Paul Beesley, aged 42, suffered an embolism while picking up nine-year-old Timothy and later died of heart failure.

He was from Wednesbury and was well known across the region due to his role as a trustee at the Heart of England Baptist Association.

Around 400 mourners led by his wife Jenni and Timothy attended a thanksgiving service for his life at Chester Road Baptist Church, Sutton Coldfield.

Previously based at Fox Yards School, Tipton, and at Marsh Hill School, Erdington, he gave up teaching to train for ministry at Regent's College, Oxford. He had a placement at Hall Green Baptist Church, where he was a trainee minister and was due to be ordained later this year.

Gritters win praise

SANDWELL'S gritting teams have been praised for keeping roads clear during the big freeze.

Council Leader Councillor Darren Cooper said they had worked round the clock to make the roads as safe as possible.

He said: "We have just gone through one of the worst cold snaps I can ever remember. Yet the crews were there battling with the conditions and I think the vast majority of people would say they did a magnificent job.

"A number of people have contacted me to say that they could tell when they were in Sandwell because the roads immediately got better.

"That was down to the gritting teams who were out up to four times a day covering nearly 300 miles of roads. They have done us proud and I cannot praise them enough."

Cllr Cooper added: "We have still got just under 3,000 tonnes of grit left and we have an order in for another 3,000 tonnes."

Work begins on Ikea £6m extension

WORK on a multi-million pound expansion of the Black Country's Ikea store gets under way this month.

The firm will invest £6.8m on the 26,877 sq ft extension at the store in Wednesbury, creating 23 jobs. The money, £5m of which has been set aside for construction, will be spent doubling the size of the customer restaurant, enlarging the lobby area and increasing the size of the shop floor to fit in more stock.

The first phase of the scheme will see an extension of the restaurant. It will also include increasing the size of the play area, lobby and toilets.

Ikea spokeswoman Claire Howes said: "Construction work on the Ikea Wednesbury store will start around mid-January with an aim to have all building works completed by early autumn, and the fit out complete by Christmas.

"We will start by creating a temporary store entrance while the new entrance is constructed.

"Following this, the refurbishment of the showroom, market hall and self serve areas will be completed in phases. We are excited about the prospect of making this investment in the local area, and also hope to bring around 23 employment opportunities with it."

Temporary on-site facilities, including a restaurant, baby changing area and toilets will be made available.

Peak

It is hoped this first phase of improvements, which were approved in September, will reduce queueing at peak times for the toilets and restaurant.

Ikea is located on the Gallagher retail park, off Junction 9 of the M6 at Wednesbury.

The business park has seen a number of new businesses move in over the last year, including the Decathlon sports superstore, baby store Mamas & Papas and also TK Maxx.

The investment in the area has created hundreds of jobs, with at least 70 new jobs at Decathlon, 60 at TK Maxx and 40 at Boots.

The latest store to open on the park was Outfit at the start of December. Run by Arcadia Group Ltd, the store has moved into a unit alongside Next, B&Q and Currys. The shop has created 40 new jobs.

SMBC offices plan for Public

UP to 70 Sandwell Council staff could move into empty office space inside £72 million West Bromwich town centre arts venue The Public.

The area on level four of the West Bromwich complex has failed to attract any tenants, more than two years after it opened.

Now, Sandwell's finance chief Councillor Steve Eling has said he is looking at plans to relocate borough staff from rented buildings into the space to save money.

Savings

But leader of the Tory opposition group Councillor Ray Nock said the move "smacked of desperation".

The council must make savings of around £75 million over the next four years following Government budget cuts.

Cllr Eling said: "If the top floor of The Public, which has been marketed for some time and is fully fitted out, is not let out within a few months I am going to move council staff in."

Heart unit revamped

HEART patients are to benefit from a £500,000 overhaul at a unit at the trust which runs Sandwell Hospital.

The coronary care ward at City Hospital, which is run by Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, has recently been refurbished and is set to welcome hundreds of patients every year.

Work on the refurbishment of ward D5 started in September and has seen separate areas for male and female patients created and a new new treatment room on the ward.

Parking fines raise council thousands

sandwellchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

SANDWELL Council has collected more than £840,000 from parking fines – more than any other Black Country local authority.

Councils across the region as a whole raked in almost £3 million in parking fines in one year.

Bosses defended the figures, insisting the fines are not just a money-making exercise.

Sandwell Council issued a total of 32,732 penalty notices in the 2009/10 financial year to raise £840,882. In the previous year it collected slightly less, £845,153, when 29,906 fines were issued.

Councillor Derek Rowley, Sandwell Council's neighbourhoods chief, said: "The point isn't about making money.

Safe

"Proper parking arrangements help keep our roads as congestion-free and safe as possible."

Wolverhampton collected £581,973 in 2009/10 and issued 21,410 fixed penalty notices. Walsall Council raked in more than £567,000 during the same period. In Dudley there were 14,058 tickets issued in 2009/10, bringing in £378,861.

Wagner tells of journey to cult celebrity status

TWENTY years ago, he was standing on the shores of Rio de Janeiro, gripping a surfboard and taking his pet lion for a walk along the beach.

Twelve months ago, he was about to undergo a third operation on his damaged shoulder, struggling to find work, and desperate.

Now, he is a cult figure, has performed on stage live for millions of viewers, and can't go out without being mobbed. He is even on the shortlist for a spot on next year's I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here! Yes, it's been an interesting journey for the Black Country's latest musical star, Wagner Carrilho.

The former Sandwell martial arts instructor was back on home ground last week with a show at Stourbridge's River Rooms where he earned £3,000 for singing five songs.

Wagner said he had "singing in the blood", and had always hoped to follow in the footsteps of his entertainer father Paschoal – known as "The Prince of the Audiences". When Wagner was a teenager, his father was struck down by illness and young Wagner decided he should get a "safe" job as a PE teacher.

"In those days, those were the safe jobs," said Wagner. "If you had a job for the Government, you had a job for life, so there were many applicants. They held tests at the Maracanã football stadium as there were so many, with spectators watching. And I passed."

The passionate Brazilian moved to Dudley to be with first wife Trudi Brass in 2002 – a marriage which broke down just weeks later – and started working as a supply teacher. He also ran his own conservatory fitting firm, and taught karate. He was made a British citizen at a ceremony at Dudley Council House in 2005.

Disaster struck when tendons in his shoulder, weakened from years of high-impact work, became damaged beyond repair. He went on X Factor, he said, simply to increase his chances of getting another job. And the rest is TV history. "It is crazy how much my life has changed since I was walking on the beach with my lion," he said. "But it's all wonderful. I feel very honoured."

Wagner is pictured in action on stage in Stourbridge last week.

Blind Dave's new challenge

'Blind' Dave Heeley, from West Bromwich, gets set for 10 marathons in 10 days

RUNNER 'Blind' Dave Heeley has not let Christmas interrupt training ahead of his next marathon mission.

His latest challenge, Blind Dave's Top to Toe Epic Fundraiser, will see the 52-year-old run and cycle from John O'Groats to Land's End in 10 days in a bid to raise £100,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

The runner, who famously ran seven marathons in seven continents in seven days in 2008, will run a marathon each morning, followed by an average 74 miles on a tandem. He will leave John O'Groats on August 10.

And though the father-of-three, of Oak Road, has indulged in the traditional Christmas feasting, he has also boosted his training schedule in the evenings.

Seeds

Dave said: "At Christmas you tend to eat the stuff you don't normally eat but I'll be back on to my normal snacks now, mixed nuts, poppy seeds and sultanas."

For details, visit the website at www. blinddaveheeley.co.uk.

Chief executive to sleep rough

THE chief executive of Sandwell Council will sleep rough outdoors later this month to raise money for the homeless.

Jan Britton will take part in the YMCA's sleep easy campaign on January 28 for one night at an undisclosed location in Oldbury. The money he raises will go towards funding West Bromwich YMCA projects, where his wife is a volunteer. Mr Britton is trying to raise £500. He said: "Each night, YMCAs provide rooms for around 7000 young people who don't have anywhere else to sleep. But this is only part of what they do. I'm sleeping rough for one night so the YMCA can provide a whole range of support for children and young people."

Visit the website http://events.ymca.org.uk/sleep-easy for more information.

Flexible work hours

FLEXI-time hours for council workers in Sandwell have been given the go-ahead.

Sandwell Council staff must now fill out the hours they work, including when they start and finish lunch breaks, on written forms.

A report to the Leader of Sandwell Council, Councillor Darren Cooper, said it was "the responsibility of the individual to ensure that he/she works the required number of hours".

Anyone abusing the scheme will be returned to standard working hours and the council reserves the right to introduce an electronic clocking-in machine.

The scheme allows workers to organise what time they work from home or in the office with managers, between 6am and 8pm, as long as they work a minimum of 32 hours a week and no more than 42 hours.Workers must take a minimum break of 30 minutes if they work six hours.

Reward offered to catch armed raiders on pub

DETECTIVES investigating an armed robbery at a pub in Great Barr have been boosted as a substantial reward offered for people to come forward with information.

Mitchells and Butlers have offered £5,000 for information which leads to the arrest and conviction of the armed robbers.

Gun-wielding robbers threatened staff at The Queslett pub, attacking one with CS spray, before fleeing with more than £12,000.

The Queslett was targeted by three masked raiders shortly before midnight on December 19.

David Lavender, from West Midlands CID, said: "The armed robbers approached three workers at the pub and held them at gunpoint. They were also threatened with violence, using a machete and CS spray."

During the robbery the victims were also forced to hand over their phones.

Charities

The offenders fled with more than £12,000 cash they took from the safe and also several bottles of spirits. They made off with two donation boxes, which contained money due to be handed over to charities.

It is believed that they fled from the pub in Queslett Road in a Toyota Avensis, navy blue or black, towards Aldridge.

Detective Constable Jason Fowler said: "We hope this reward will encourage people to come forward with information and help us bring those responsible to justice as soon as possible."

Anybody who has information which they think might help or who witnessed anything in the area at the time is asked to contact DC Fowler at Force CID on 0345 113 5000.

Alternatively call the independent charity Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Youth council wins Diana excellence award

West Bromwich Youth Council members and Councillor Ann Shackleton

MEMBERS of West Bromwich Youth Council have received the Diana Certificate of Excellence for their community work.

The award, named after the late Diana, Princess of Wales, recognises people aged 12-18 who work to improve communities, organisation or schools.

Diego Wright, chair of West Bromwich Youth Council, said: "We have had a busy year and we are very proud of receiving the Diana Certificate of Excellence.

"We hope the good work will continue in 2011 despite Government cuts. Young people are the future."

Events organised by the youth council included the Stand Up Sandwell event at West Bromwich Town Hall, the World Cup Festival in the town and distributing leaflets for youth activities in the town.

Councillor Ann Shackleton, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for culture, said: "I congratulate all the young people involved in the excellent work at West Bromwich Youth Council.

Chosen

"They were chosen for the award because of their commitment and work over the past year, which has benefited themselves, other local young people and the wider community in a very positive way."

Maggie Turner, chief executive of the Diana Award, added: "The certificate is for young people who make a positive change within their communities or schools."

To nominate for the award visit www.diana-award.org.uk

For more information contact Abdul Kahar on 0121 569 8455.

£98m is cost of travel subsidy

SUBSIDIES and concessions for public transport in the West Midlands will cost the taxpayer nearly £2 million a week.

The annual figure – more than £98m – covers the cost for around 525,000 people over 60 and blind and disabled people to have concessionary passes, and for children under 16 to travel half price.

It is based on figures from April last year to March this year.

Free travel for elderly people, and for eligible disabled people on buses will cost £62m, with an extra £11.6m to cover half-price bus travel for children under 16. The money is paid to private bus companies who provide public services.

A further £12m is spent on Ring and Ride schemes, with £8.6 being spent subsidising extra bus services on routes in which private operators cannot lay on a service.

Free rail and Metro travel for pensioners and blind and disabled people will cost a further £4m.

Centro spokesman Steve Swingler said: "The West Midlands has one of the most generous concessionary travel schemes in the country."

Builders moving in at £2.5m office scheme

WORK is under way on a £2.5 million development in Sandwell that is set to offer short term office space for small businesses.

The new business centre in Oldbury is being built on the site of a former petrol station at the corner of McKean Road and Bromford Road.

It will provide 68 small office units for new and existing businesses, with room for up to 250 people in total.

Sandwell Council has joined forces with Pure Offices which will fund and deliver the project.

The company specialises in providing "easy in – easy out" office space for start up businesses.

It is hoped that offering low overheads will give small businesses in the area an opportunity to grow in the difficult financial climate.

The scheme will also support to local businesses before it is completed this year, with a commitment by site contractor Barnwood Construction to recruit subcontractors and source materials in the Sandwell area.

Councillor Ian Jones said the enterprise centre was good news for local businesses.

He said: "This development, which is in a prime location right next door to Sandwell and Dudley train station, helps meet the need for more quality office space in Sandwell.

Opportunity

"The fact that local businesses are poised to benefit by having the opportunity to get involved with the construction of the site is an added bonus."

Permission for the site was granted in February.

Work on the site got under way before Christmas and is scheduled to be completed by October.

Businesses will be able to rent offices by the month dependent on the success of the company and the state of the market.

Councillor Ian Jones with, left to right, Nick Smith, managing director of Pure Offices, Simon Carey, MD of Barnwood Construction and John Sutton, head of economic regeneration and skills at Sandwell Council

£1m loan fund to help cash-strapped firms

BUSINESSES in Sandwell that have struggled to get loans from banks are set to benefit from a £1million fund.

The Sandwell Loan Fund is being extended to 2013 and is expected to create at least eight new businesses, 25 jobs and safeguard a further 60 jobs.

Sandwell Council is set to contribute £300,000 to the fund.

The loan fund has already been available for two years and was put together by the council, European and Advantage West Midlands sources.

Initially £750,000 was available over two years for lending to local firms having problems getting cash. Under the new plans it is proposed to apply for £300,000 match funding from the European Regional Development Fund while the Black Country Reinvestment Society would commit a further £400,000.

A report to the council says the original loan fund has already provided loans totalling £514,000 to 24 Sandwell companies and it is anticipated the full £750,000 will be committed by the 2010/11 financial year.

The report adds: "The requirement for access to finance is particularly evident in Sandwell as the borough has a high proportion of small and micro enterprises (83 per cent of businesses in Sandwell employ fewer than 50, with 65 per cent employing fewer than 10) who rely on bank lending to finance working capital and investment. Locally, even the most viable new and existing businesses are experiencing considerable difficulty in raising bank finance for working capital and investment."

Housing plan

PLANS to turn a former vandal-plagued school site in West Bromwich into a council housing estate have been submitted.

The revamp will see 28 homes built on the former Kent Close Primary School in Denbigh Drive, Hateley Heath.

Hopes are high for funding from a £15 million Government grant. The homes would be a mix of 11 two-bed houses, two four-bed houses and four two-bed flats as well as 11 three-bed houses. The plan is part of a bigger scheme to develop 206 homes in six streets.

Market's record number

MORE than three million people visited Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market – setting a new record, organisers say.

The 10th annual festive market drew to a close on Christmas Eve with the traditional handing over of leftover food and sweets and a donation of money to children's homes and homeless charities.

Visitors

Birmingham City Council leader Mike Whitby said: "The Frankfurt Christmas Market is now firmly established in the city's calendar and attracts visitors from far and wide.

"The market provides an excellent opportunity for Birmingham to showcase its wider retail offering."

The market, started with 24 stalls in 2001, is now the biggest outside Germany and Austria with 180 stalls.

thechronicle

Black Country pools being plundered for carp and roach

Calling for help over very fishy goings-on

POOLS and ponds across the Black Country that have been plagued by fish thefts will be monitored by environmental officers in a bid to net the thieves in the act.

The Environment Agency says it is vital that people report the thefts so that officers could track down the culprits and find out "what they are doing and why they are doing it".

Carp, roach and other breeds of fish have recently been stolen from waters atWillenhall Memorial Park and Moorcroft Wood Local Nature Reserve, Moxley.

The Environment Agency said it did not know the reasons behind the thefts but would investigate whenever reports were made.

Spokeswoman Lyn Fraley said: "Since June 1, we have had new powers to act if people are caught taking fish from still waters without permission.

"If people suspect thefts or illegal fishing are taking place, they need to contact us immediately and tell us as much detail as possible.

Evidence

"They need to tell us things like car registration numbers, exact times and dates and descriptions of the offenders – as if they were telling the police.

"Evidence is crucial and we will not hesitate to investigate and prosecute."

In Willenhall Memorial Park, thieves have been seen loading fish into the back of vans during late-night raids.

Frozen waters have forced fish to rise near the surface making them easy pickings for the gangs, which are believed to be both selling them on and/or cooking them.

Earlier this year, thieves stole hordes of fish from Moorcroft Wood Local Nature Reserve in Moxley.

Anyone with suspicions should call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60.

Barbara did 'allot' for plot holders

SANDWELL Council's allotments officer is retiring after 22 years running the borough's 1,500 allotments.

But Barbara Carroll won't be putting away her tools, as she plans to continue gardening at her home in Stourbridge.

Barbara, who started working for the council in 1988, has seen two of Sandwell's allotments win national awards, and a Sandwell plot holder also regained the Intertown Allotment Competition Crown.

Barbara, aged 60, was also heavily involved in an award-winning community agricultural site at Salop Drive, Oldbury.

She said she now plans to spend her time walking, sailing and watching Wolverhampton Wanderers at Molineux, where she has a season ticket.

She said: "During the years I have worked at the council I have met, worked with and worked for some lovely people. Allotment plot-holders are the salt of the earth."

Sandwell Mayor Councillor Pauline Hinton and Councillor Ann Shackleton, with allotments officer Barbara Carroll, who is retiring after 22 years

Chairman of Blackheath Organ, Keyboard and Musical Society Malcolm Jones

Members are key to success

BLACKHEATH Organ, Keyboard and Musical Society is on the lookout for new members.

The club invites members to listen, learn and perform with the organ and keyboards, and is hoping to expand its membership to include more young people.

Malcolm Jones, spokesman for the club said: "We are looking for new members, whether they want to come along to learn, play, or just listen. We have 15 members at the moment, from all over the West Midlands and are hoping to get some younger people involved.

"We have had a few more musicians get in contact recently, which is really positive and we want to build on that."

The society, which holds regular meeting, recitals, and charity shows meets on the second Monday of every month at Rowley Regis Conservative Club in Hawn Lane. Meetings start at 7.30pm. Anyone that would like more details should call Malcolm on 0121 4397260.

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Ukuleles for hire at the library

AT one time a mere cough would provoke disapproving stares in a library.

But times have changed and now people in the Black Country are being invited to come along and learn the ukulele. The scheme is under way at branches in Tipton.

Robert Hazel, manager of Tipton library, said: "We are really excited about offering the loan of ukuleles, in addition to the usual books, CDs and DVDs.

"We are working in partnership with the Midland Music Network to promote music in the area.

Rainbow

"In all we have 20 ukuleles, painted every colour of the rainbow, that will be available to borrow in the same way as a book. They can be loaned for four weeks at a time and renewed in just the same way."

Ukuleles will be available to loan from libraries in Tipton, Glebefields, Great Bridge, as well as from the Neptune Health Centre in Tipton.

Each instrument comes with a tutor book and a DVD on how to learn to play. If successful the scheme could be rolled out to other areas.

Mr Hazel added: "The cost of the project has been covered by a grant from Tipton Town team.

"Ukuleles are now the most popular instrument in schools and are an easy instrument to learn."

"Research also shows that leaning to play a musical instrument can have a really beneficial influence on health."

Playing the ukulele is library user Pritpal Burjy with musician Steve Meredith

Brindley II closer

NEARLY all the land has been bought ahead of a £42 million project to regenerate Smethwick, developers say.

The Brindley II project is expected to transform the town with 193 new family homes and a boost to the local economy with shops, cafes, roads and footpaths.

Regeneration partnership PxP West Midlands say they are closer to securing all the sites needed for the new buildings, which are expected to take up land around Lewisham Road, Mafeking Road and the Birmingham Mainline canal.

Managing director Mark Stapleton said legal powers for compulsory purchase orders to buy up remaining land would be used.

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Safety message is driven home for students

Front, instructor Steve Cook, from Wombourne, and Wednesbury student Myles Pious, aged 16

DRIVING school experts have been giving sixth-formers a reminder on the importance of safety on the roads.

Instructors from BSM visited Stuart Bathurst School, Wednesbury, to drive home their message to 40 students aged 16 and 17 in the lower sixth form.

The visit was organised as part of a partnership between BSM and Sandwell Council, and instructors began the day by showing a video of a real-life accident, showing the effect is had on the driver and the victim's family.

The students tried out a driving simulator machine before putting the skills to the test during a series of mini-lessons on the school car park. A driving theory lesson was also carried out with students and a quiz was held.

Sixth form learning mentor Marc McLaren said: "The message definitely got through."

Hundreds sign library petition

HUNDREDS have signed a petition in support of a Sandwell library, which is feared could face the axe due to council budget cuts.

The Friends of Rounds Green Library in Oldbury say the facility is likely to close as Sandwell Council makes £75 million of savings over the next four years.

Almost 500 signatures have now been collected by users of the library who are desperate to see it remain open. The community library in Martley Road is located on the Lion Farm Estate in one of the most deprived areas of the borough and opened in 1966.

The Friends group say the library, which also offers free computer access, homework and art clubs, and coffee mornings, is believed to be a cutback target.

Chairman of the Friends of Rounds Green Library, Marie Belfort, said: "Rounds Green Library is an essential and much-loved part of this community. To lose it or to see its services drastically reduced would have a terrible impact on the lives of residents.

"The last two years have seen a steady increase in the amount of people using the library and enjoying all the resources, a sign that it is needed now more than ever."

Sandwell cabinet member for strategic resources, Councillor Steve Eling, said he could not prejudge which services would be cut. He will be receiving a report on detailed cuts soon.

Organist Jean raises £1,600 for the heroes

Jean Martyn with a cheque for Help for Heroes presented to regional co-ordinator Jeremy Hobbs

AN internationally famous concert organist, who has raised £1,600 for soldiers injured in Afghanistan, has presented the windfall to charity bosses.

Jean Martyn, from Brewood in Staffordshire, presented the proceeds of her recital in aid of Help for Heroes during an organ concert at West Bromwich Town Hall.

She raised the money in a concert at St Mary's and St Chad's church in her home village, in front of a sell-out crowd including representatives from the army, RAF Staffordshire Regimental Association and the Royal British Legion.

Military

The concert included military music and songs from the 1940s.

The proceeds, raised from ticket sales and donations in November, were presented to Help for Heroes Staffordshire co-ordinator Jeremy Hobbs.

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Photographer shows faith in Soho Road

PHOTOGRAPHS documenting life on one of the West Midlands' best-known roads have gone on show at Wolverhampton Art Gallery until February 26.

Under Gods: Stories from Soho Road, by Liz Hingley, gives an insight into the different cultures and faiths that live around the road, which runs through Handsworth.

Singers

The artist spent two years researching, living with and taking pictures of different religious communities. Images include a dinner meeting of the Council of Faiths, a Sikh wedding and Polish Catholic carol singers.

Miss Hingley said: "At a time when religion is seen to cause much social unrest and breeds fear through misunderstanding, the photographs show the reality and intensity of different lifestyles and the beauty religion brings to everyday inner city life."

Wolverhampton Art Gallery's Kate Andrews with one of the Under Gods pieces

Drainage work is closing road for two months

A WEST Bromwich road will be closed in the New Year for drainage and utility work to be carried out.

Sandwell Road, between Bratt Street and Mill Street, was due to close on Tuesday and then remain shut until March 11, in order to allow the work to be carried out as part of the new BT building.

Diversion

A diversion route will be set up via: Sandwell Road, High Street, Temple Street, Mill Street and vice-versa.

Anyone has queries regarding the work should contact Philip Brown of Bowmer & Kirkland on (0121) 525 4305.

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Jobless in line for £5m funding

UNEMPLOYED people could be offered a £5.6million lifeline by Sandwell Council bosses.

Chiefs will bid for £5.6m funding to help young people in the whole region.

The authority will handle the bid to the European Social Fund on behalf of 45 community, voluntary, public and private bodies.

If funding is awarded, it will cover schemes to get those aged over 16 into work and training from January 2011 for three years.

Councillor Steve Eling, Sandwell's finance boss, said the authority would manage the bid for the whole region to keep the process simple.

He said: "It is going to be a good New Year's present.

"It is a programme that will draw down European social funding and will operate across the Black Country and there will be about 45 organisations involved in delivering the programme.

"It looks a very positive programme that can be expected to make a real difference.

"We at Sandwell Council will manage the programme because it is going to be quite complex to manage it across a number of organisations."

Cllr Eling added: "More than £5m will go into helping young people which will be a very positive move."

Chloe is face of hospice appeal

Donna Payton and Dale Hadley, of Tipton, with their young daughter Chloe

A YOUNGSTER from Tipton youngster was the face of Acorns Children's Hospice's Christmas fundraising campaign.

Chole Hadley-Payton, aged 21 months, features in the charity's Be A Star campaign, which appeals for support from people of the West Midlands.

The youngster suffers from what doctors believe to be congenital myasthenia gravis, a neuromuscular disorder that causes weakness of the voluntary muscles, leading to difficulties with breathing, talking, chewing or swallowing, general fatigue and reduced mobility. She spent her first Christmas last year at Birmingham Children's Hospital and was still living on a ward when she reached her first birthday but was finally able to leave hospital for a Christmas at h ome at Highfield Road with mother Donna Payton and father Dale Hadley, thanks to "step down" care provided by Acorns.

To find out more visit www.acorns.org.uk/christmas website.

Register births in easy new service

NEW parents in Sandwell will be able to register births easier thanks to a new service.

The Tell Us Once service means parents can register births at the council's Highfields register office in West Bromwich and workers will pass details onto council and Government departments. The move means parents will not have to fill in lots of forms when new babies come into the world.

Sandwell Council leader, Councillor Darren Cooper said: "Sandwell is one of the first councils to bring in the Department for Work and Pensions' Tell Us Once scheme.

Happier

"It has proved really popular and helpful in bereavement services, and now it will be making the happier process of registering a birth even easier.

"Staff at Highfields in West Bromwich will be able to inform departments including children's services, education, libraries, council housing, council tax benefits, child benefit and the Family Information Service about their new arrival.

"We just want to give people better customer service and make registering a birth easier."

For information call 0121 569 2480.

First view of casino at Oldbury

THE artist's impression (below) shows the proposed £15 million casino development in Oldbury.

Developer St Modwen has submitted plans for the project near the M5.

The development, which is planned for land at Birchley Island, will also include a hotel and offices and is yet to be considered by borough planning bosses. It would be built on a triangle of land to the south of the traffic island, adjacent to the motorway slip road and create about 180 jobs – 120 in the casino, 90 of which would be full-time.

The office complex would create 33 jobs, with 40 vacancies at the hotel. Further jobs would be created while the development was being built.

Plans submitted to Sandwell Council state that proposals would see the creation of a Grosvenor Casino and the hotel would offer up to 80 bedrooms.

The developers say: "The proposed development represents a unique opportunity to bring an important and prominent site fully into productive use."

"With an enthusiastic high-quality anchor occupier already identified, the scheme is well placed to unlock the potential of the site, where earlier proposals have proved impossible to get off the ground."

Prominent

"The application site is a prominent gateway into the area and high quality development of the type proposed will create an attractive landmark here, enhance the image of Oldbury, and encourage confidence to support further development and investment locally. The area within which the application site is located is not just disadvantaged, it is amongst the most disadvantaged locations in the country. "The proposed development will help to address this."

A blanket ban on casinos was introduced in Sandwell in 2006 because councillors feared that they might encourage gambling.

However, Rank Group was awarded its licence five years ago, before the ban came into force.

An artist's impression of the casino development

Lynne Payne at Age UK in Wednesbury is appealing for unwanted presents

Charity shop in a desperate bid to boost donated stock

A CHARITY shop in Wednesbury is appealing for unwanted Christmas gifts to be donated after the ice and snow saw its stocks fall.

The appeal is being made by staff at the Age UK shop on the town's Union Street.

The charity was created when Age Concern and Help the Aged combined in February last year.

Workers said that people have struggled to drop off donations due to the adverse weather conditions and hope now that Christmas is over they will experience a boost in donations.

Sue Waring, manager at the shop, which has been based at its Union Street location for the last five years, said: "It has been a very slow time for us. The ice and snow meant it has been difficult for people to get out to leave donations and as a result are stocks are very much depleted.

"In terms of volunteers we are doing really well. We just need more goods for sale."

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thechronicle

From The Hawthorns to queen of the Playboy mansion

A GLAMOUR model who grew up in a pub in West Bromwich is engaged to Playboy multi-millionaire Hugh Hefner.

Crystal Harris, aged 24, was raised in Ye Olde Rose & Crown in Cape Street, a stone's throw from West Bromwich Albion's Hawthorns ground.

Hefner announced the engagement on social networking website Twitter.

The 84-year-old revealed in his message that he gave Crystal an engagement ring as a special gift on Christmas Eve.

Hefner, who has married twice before, told his 427,902 followers on Christmas Day that Harris burst into tears when he popped the question.

The Playboy founder, who normally goes by the name 'Hef', wrote in his message: "When I gave Crystal the ring, she burst into tears. This is the happiest Christmas weekend in memory."

And to clarify the ring was for the engagement, he later wrote: "Yes, the ring I gave Crystal is an engagement ring. I didn't mean to make a mystery out of it."

Third

Crystal will be Hefner's third wife but a date has not yet been set for their nuptials.

The announcement follows the Playboy founder divorcing his second wife, Kimberly Conrad, earlier this year.

Hefner, who started Playboy in 1953, first married his college sweetheart, Mildred Williams, but they divorced in 1959.

Crystal, who was Playboy Playmate of the Month in December last year, later responded on Twitter to say she was shocked so many people were talking about their news. In her own message on the website, she wrote: "Hef and I are TRENDING on @twitter!!!! WOW!!!"

Crystal has previously dismissed claims she was with Hefner for his £27 million fortune, insisting she would sign a pre-nuptial agreement before the couple wed.

Along with the rest of her family, Crystal first moved to San Diego, California, when she was 10.

Crystal met the 84-year-old at the 2008 Halloween party at the Playboy Mansion, where she has been living for the past two years.

The former Black Country girl began modelling as she studied for psychology degree, which she quit after moving into the mansion.

She is now set on a singing career after signing a £12 million seven- album deal with Organica Music Group earlier this year.

She said her love for music began back in Ye Olde Rose & Crown when she would sing along with her dad as he performed for the customers. Ye Olde Rose & Crown is now derelict and boarded up.

Hugh Hefner and Crystal Harris

Free bag of grit plan

EVERY household in Sandwell could be given a free bag of grit under plans being considered by the borough's council.

Council leader Councillor Darren Cooper wants people to do their bit during the big freeze and said it could cost the authority as little as 20p per 10kg bag for the borough's 90,000 households.

Plans are now being costed and a decision will be made in the new year.

Cllr Cooper said: "We wouldn't be able to deliver it, but we are also talking to voluntary organisations that could drop a bag of grit off on a voluntary basis."

At Lightwoods Primary, deputy head Phil Robinson. Pupils at front: Eva Ramsey and Vianni Deu, both aged five. Back, Sophie Rickard, eight, Matthew Jones, eight, Thomas Hodder, nine, Matthew Degg 10 and Arandeep Kalam, seven

Fond farewell to deputy head

THE school bell sounded for the final time for the deputy head teacher at an Oldbury school at the end of term.

Deputy head and ardent Albion fan Philip Robinson, aged 60, was greeted by football club's mascot Baggie Bird in a special assembly to mark his retirement after 20 years at Lightwoods Primary School, Oldbury.

The 210 pupils said goodbye to the popular teacher at a special assembly where they sang songs and certificates were presented. It was then that Baggie Bird presented Mr Robinson with his leaving present – a subscription to the National Trust in England and Scotland.

Lightwoods headteacher Elaine Bowen said: "It was a very sad day for the school, the end of another era losing such a well-loved and respected teacher."

A parent organised the Albion surprise for the former year six teacher, who is from Halesowen.

The children also said goodbye to Mary Hemmings, a lunch supervisor who has been at the school for the last 16 years.

All smiles at the dentist's, from left: receptionist Yazmeen Matloob, dentist Dr Mirza and dental nurse Karen Kaur

Bid to boost Barnardos fund

TIPTON Dental Practice were giving away more than £500 worth of dental care in their festive charity raffle.

Principle dentist Dr Kazim Mirza and his staff at Tipton Dental Practice on Owen Street, were hoping to raise an equivalent £500 for Barnardos, the UK's leading children's charity.

The team have been collecting donations for the past three months but hope that by offering prizes more patients will be encouraged to part with their small change.

Community

Over the past nine-years the surgery has dedicated much of its time to engaging the local community with various events.

Dr Mirza said: "We really want to help promote Barnardos and we hope that our raffle can draw in enough funds to beat last year's £300.

"I hope that everyone will show their support to such a worthy cause."

This year's prizes include a free in-surgery tooth whitening session worth £400, three home whitening kits and several oral hygiene kits including toothbrush, floss-picks and mouthwashes.

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Tuesday 11 January 5.00pm to 7.30pm	•	•	•	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm
Wednesday 12 January 5.00pm to 7.30pm						10am - 4pm
Thursday 13 January 5.00pm to 7.30pm	•	•	•	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm
Saturday 15 January 9.00am to 1.00pm	•	•	•			9am - 1pm
Monday 17 January 5.00pm to 7.30pm	•	•	•			10am - 4pm
Tuesday 18 January 5.00pm to 7.30pm	•	•	•	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm	10am - 4pm
Wednesday 19 January 5.00pm to 7.30pm						10am - 4pm
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Castle Vale Skills Centre
Spitfire House, 10 High Street, Castle Vale
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Year 6 children at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Wednesbury, Ellie Harbinson, left, aged 10, Ben Hellend, 10, Lewis Parsons, 11, and Eva Djukic, 10

History brought to life

VISITORS to a Wednesbury school were treated to a 1940s-themed tea dance.

Year 6 children at St Mary's Catholic Primary School Manor House Road, invited parishioners, relatives and governors to enjoy an event to mark the end of their history topic. More than 30 pupils dressed as evacuees, entertained visitors with wartime songs, including Run, Rabbit Run and It's a Long Way to Tipperary.

Pupils also performed wartime tunes on their brass and woodwind instruments. They also led some period dancing with a waltz and quickstep, having learnt the steps from dance teacher Andrew Henshaw from nearby Stuart Bathurst College of Performing Arts.

The event ended with servings of tea and cake while guests shared their wartime memories with the children.

Preacher awarded £4,000 damages

WEST Midlands Police have been ordered to pay more than £4,000 in damages to a Christian street preacher who was arrested and handcuffed for claiming that gay people will go to hell.

Anthony Rollins, who quoted the King James Bible on the subject of the 'effeminate' as he preached in Birmingham, was held in a cell for nearly four hours after a passer-by dialled 999.

The member of the public had claimed that the language was "hugely offensive", but a judge said police had arrested 45-year-old Mr Rollins "unthinkingly".

The force is considering an appeal.

Mr Rollins, who said he was treated like a "common criminal" has been speaking on the streets of Birmingham as a member of a Christian mission for 12 years. In June 2008 he was handing out leaflets in the city centre and quoting passages from the King James Bible relating to homosexuality.

One passage condemned the "unrighteous", including fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, and "abusers of themselves with mankind".

Mr Rollins told listeners that effeminate meant homosexuals. Quoting the Book of Revelation, he said "the abominable shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone".

Judge Lance Ashworth QC told at Birmingham County Court that police who made the arrest acted "as a matter of routine".

"This was not done in any way maliciously, spitefully or arrogantly. It was done unthinkingly."

Speaking after the ruling, Mr Rollins said: "The judgment is excellent news. But I didn't do this for the compensation. I did it for freedom of speech."

Judge Ashworth also dismissed the evidence by the onlooker who called police, saying: "He struck me as a man full of his own self-importance who in the witness box relished the attention and greatly embellished his evidence."

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An artist's impression of how the town centre project could look after its opening, which is scheduledfor autumn 2012

Stores, restaurants and cinema in Tesco plan for town centre

WORK will start on West Bromwich's long-awaited £200million Tesco development in May.

The 570,487sq ft scheme will include a Tesco Extra store, shops, restaurants, cinema, car parking and a petrol station. It will take around 18 months to complete and is set to open to the public in autumn 2012.

Work on a new ring road for West Bromwich town centre is set to start this month and will be the first phase of the works to get under way.

The ring road will be created from the A41 Expressway which will run to the north east of the old petrol filling station site onto Reform Street. It is expected to take until autumn to complete.

Two new roundabouts will be created as part of the new roadway, as well as a mini roundabout for access into a new petrol filling station. The ring road will loop towards Cronehills Linkway and will finish at Reform Street.

Jobs

Tony Fletcher, corporate affairs manager for Tesco, said: "A tremendous amount of work has been undertaken over recent years to develop a truly outstanding retail experience for West Bromwich, which should create around 2,000 new jobs for the town. We are now able to progress with a forward programme, where everyone can see the scheme taking shape and share our excitement. It really will transform part of the town centre and strengthen retail choice, making West Bromwich a top destination for shopping and leisure."

Tesco bosses say the road improvements will provide much easier access and traffic flow around West Bromwich town centre.

Mr Fletcher added: "It is a major project and we are working closely with the highways team to ensure minimal disruption."

Councillor Ian Jones, jobs and economy boss at Sandwell Council, said: "After so much preparation it is good to start 2011 with contractors coming on site and see the improvements taking place over the next year."

Tesco said it is currently talking to a number of retail and leisure business who want to take on units in the new shopping area.

It has yet to secure a big name "anchor store" for the new development but said negotiations are ongoing with interested parties.

Sandwell parks and countryside team members Sunish Patel, Barbara Carroll and Carole Calloway present more than £600 to Sandwell mayor Councillor Pauline Hinton raised by the Sandwell Horticultural show for her charities

Contest is a fundraiser

A VEGETABLE growing competition in Sandwell, which attracted more then 1,000 entries, helped raise more than £600 for Alzheimer's sufferers and cancer patients.

The annual Sandwell Horticultural Show raised £622 for the mayor of Sandwell's chosen charities, the Alzheimer's Society and Macmillan Cancer Support.

The event, organised by Sandwell Council's parks and countryside team, took place on August bank holiday and proceeds have now been counted.

The majority of the cash was raised through the 'biggest vegetable' competitions and an auction of show produce.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for youth, culture and leisure Councillor Ann Shackleton said: "This is the highest amount we have donated, topping last year's donation of £610.

"I want to say thank you to the team in the horticultural marquee for working so hard to make the show a success."

The cheque was presented to the Mayor of Sandwell Councillor Pauline Hinton.

Forums meet to discuss problems

PEOPLE in Oldbury can raise any crime, anti-social behaviour or environmental concerns at forum meetings in January.

Sandwell Council's communities unit organises forum meetings in all Sandwell neighbourhoods. Forums are a chance for people to bring concerns about their area to the attention of the council's neighbourhood managers, police and other partner organisations, so that action can be taken.

The meetings in Oldbury will start today (Thursday) at Bristnall at Londonderry Baptist Church, Bristnall Hall Road, from 6.30pm.

All the meetings will be at 6.30 and can last for up to an hour and a half.

Langley

The Langley forum meet on Monday, January 17, at Ebenezer Wesleyan Reform Church, Langley High Street; Oldbury, Tuesday, January 18, at Burnt Tree Primary School, Hill Road; Old Warley, January 19, St Hubert's Primary School, Clent Road.

For more information, contact neighbourhood manager Parmjit Sahota on 0121 569 3557, or email parmjit_sahota@sandwell.gov.uk.

People can report crime to police on 0345 113 5000. They can also report problems to Sandwell's anti-social behaviour helpline by phoning 0845 359 7500, texting SANDWELL ASB plus your message to 60003 or emailing contact@sandwell.gov.uk.

Cycle for fitness

THOSE wanting to burn off those extra calories after the Christmas festivities can saddle up and join in family bike cycle rides around Sandwell Valley. The sessions are held on the first Sunday of every month and start at 10am. All rides are short and easy and last two to three hours with a break. For details call 0800 011 4656.

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Sell-out crowd share a night to remember as band make official debut

Homecoming for Black Country rock supergroup

BCC in concert with Glenn Hughes (left) and Joe Bonamassa

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION, WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL

THE Black Country has a new band to claim as its own, one firmly in the tradition of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Judas Priest.

The region established on the pounding of metal had plenty of pounding metal to celebrate when the supergroup quartet came 'home' for their first official gig after storming to the top of the rock charts with their self-titled debut album Black Country Communion.

Former Trapeze and Deep Purple rocker Glenn Hughes has swopped home in Cannock for southern California, and gained a transAtlantic drawl, but the 'voice of rock' was in fine form at the venue where he first performed 40 years earlier.

Joining him was Dudley-born Jason Bonham, a great drummer like his late father, the Led Zep sticksman John; and two Americans, guitarist-singer Joe Bonamassa and keyboardist Derek Sherinian.

From the moment Hughes' thunderous bassline introduced the band's anthem Black Country, the song which topped and tailed the gig, the sell-out audience knew they were in for something special. And they were.

The combination of four great talents gelled to perfection. Hughes can still hit notes only previously attained by scalded cats with apparent ease and his fluid, funky bass makes the molten metal flow. The sharp-dressed Bonamassa plays with a masterful eloquence that makes him a candidate for best blues rock guitarist of his era. Sherinian has a Ray Manzarek-like touch on the keys. But the heart beat of the band is Bonham's pounding propulsive drumming.

Tribute

Highlights of the 90-minute set included the bluesy Beggarman, an extended version of Too Late For The Sun and Joe Bonamassa star vehicles Song of Yesterday and The Ballad of John Henry.

Then BCC turned back the clock for Trapeze opus Medusa and, in tribute to John Bonham, a version of Led Zep's No Quarter. Sista Jane was delivered with a Stones-like swagger before the band returned to encore with a scorching version of Deep Purple's Burn.

The crowd seemed reluctant to leave until Hughes promised that the band would return in the summer to commune some more.

Leon Burakowski

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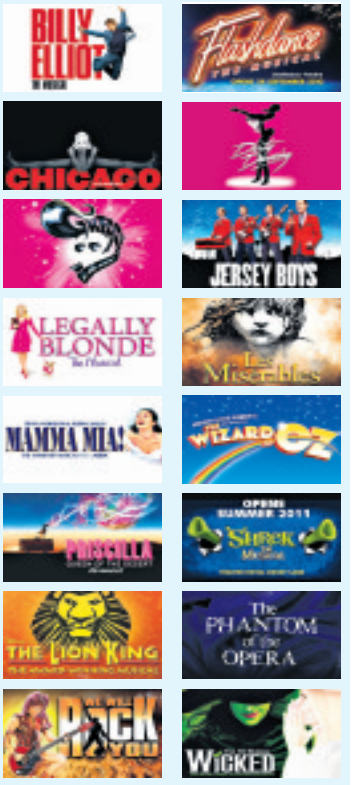

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Rich history – the interior of St Bartholomew's Church, Wednesbury, which is celebrating 800 years

Celebrating 800 years

IT HAS been 800 years since its first mention in an historic document. And now worshippers at a Wednesbury church are looking back over its rich history to celebrate the milestone.

Although the date St Bartholomew's Church was built is unknown, its first reference comes from a document drafted for King John in 1211.

Reverend Tim Vasby-Burnie is hoping to bring its history under the spotlight to celebrate the anniversary.

"We believe the church had been there a lot longer than mentioned in the rolls but this is the first record we have," he said.

"There is never going to a more definitive birthday than this so we have decided to celebrate it now."

The reference to the church appears in the Plea Rolls of King John in 1211 when one of the royal chaplains, a master William, was appointed to the church of Wednesbury.

Central

Celebrations being considered for the 800th anniversary include a nostalgic exhibition detailing the development of the church over the years, public tours and a flower festival.

"The church has been central to the people of Wednesbury for hundreds of years," said Mr Vasby-Burnie.

Although the Plea Rolls feature the earliest reference to the church, Roman numerals found on a roof beam when the church's roof collapsed in 1765 suggested it existed in some form in 711AD.

Evolved

Peter Knowles, chairman of the Wednesbury History Society, said: "There is very little of the original church that remains now.

"It has evolved over many years."

Rev Tim Vasby-Burnie at the church gates

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Sergeant Gavin Peever with Samantha Bates and teenagers James Innes, Becky Harrison, Laura Durrant, Pc Abbey Jones and Aaron Moore

New lifeguards celebrate

TEENAGERS in Tipton are celebrating after passing a lifeguarding course.

The five youngsters took part in the eight-week course which was delivered by two police officers who are accredited instructors and form part of the West Midlands Police lifesaving team.

The five students, aged between 15 and 17, were selected from Alexandra High and RSA Academy. As part of the course the students were required to attend Tipton Swimming Baths one evening a week for two hours, where their time was spent learning first aid and practical lifesaving techniques.

They all received a recognised national pool lifesaving award which they can use to help them find employment in the leisure industry or gain entry onto a sports course.

All of the students are also now qualified to apply for the bronze medallion swimming course in February.

Meanwhile, adults can now learn to become lifeguards and swimming teachers with new courses at pools in Sandwell.

A lifeguard course at Langley Swimming Centre, Vicarage Road, Oldbury, starts on January 10, and costs £190.

A swimming teachers' course is on Tuesdays at Smethwick Swimming Centre from February 8. For details, call 0121 506 4983.

Conman walked off with savings and a prized tree

POLICE are appealing for the public's help to find a man who took a Great Barr pensioner's prized tree and substantial savings in a "despicable" crime.

The thief knocked on the elderly woman's door in Shady Lane claiming to be a gardener. Although he was unknown to her, she let him into her back garden where he uprooted a 6ft tree.

It is believed he then went into the woman's house and took an undisclosed amount of cash before leaving with the tree in the direction of Aldridge Road.

Detective Sergeant Ruth Lockyer, from Handsworth police station, who is leading the investigation, said: "This is a despicable crime where the offender has tricked his way into the elderly victim's home and taken a large tree as well as her savings."

Conspicuous

She added: "Walking around Great Barr with a 6ft tree, he will have been very conspicuous. I would ask anyone who saw the man or who may have been offered the tree to get in touch."

The thief struck on the afternoon of December 7. He is described as white, aged between 42 and 44, around 6ft to 6ft 2in, with short auburn hair, medium build, wearing blue jeans and a blue jumper.

Anyone with information should contact DS Lockyer on 0345 113 5000 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Lewis wants to be starting something

THERE is just one thing that Lewis Kirkpatrick wants this year, and that is to gain a slot in front of the Britain's Got Talent judges.

The six-year-old Abbey Infant School pupil from Bearwood took his love of Michael Jackson to the Britain's Got Talent trials in Birmingham.

He was up against 10,000 other people who were all vying for the chance to star on television in front of judges Michael McIntyre, David Hasselhoff and Amanda Holden.

Smile

Lewis's dad Ian, 44, said: "When Lewis was performing, the producer had a smile on her face and they played the whole track, which they don't normally do."

Lewis, who lives in Wigorn Road, Bearwood has to wait until February to find out if he was successful in the trials.

Lewis Kirkpatrick dances like a little Michael Jackson

Jonny Cole from Wednesbury who has written a song about his home town

Witty ditty about home town is an online smash

A COMEDY song about a Black Country musician's home town has become an internet smash – achieving more than 10,400 hits in less than a month.

Jonny Cole penned Wednesbury Song in his kitchen and had no idea it would be so popular.

"I have been writing music for years and have always dreamt of connecting to lots of people through music," said the 31-year-old, of Church Hill. "This song was written in the space of about 20 minutes over a cup of coffee.

"I was just messing around and was only going to play it to my dad and mate. But my dad said I should post it on YouTube and then it just kicked off."

Album

Before Wednesbury Song, Mr Cole had written music on more serious themes. He has been playing the guitar for 17 years and has performed gigs at pubs across the Black Country.

He is now putting together an album of comedy tracks and is planning a Black Country pub tour.

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Film puts focus on dyslexia sufferers

Film maker Dan Evans and, inset, Natasha Bennett

KRISSY, the star of a new Black Country made film, has these words to say to schools: "I'm not stupid. The teachers just don't understand me."

Young Wordsley film maker Dan Evans, managing director of Expressive Arts Productions, has produced the DVD – called Musik – with the help of family and friends, a Star Wars actor, the famous Pinewood Studios, local schools and an Aston Martin supercar.

And Dan achieved all of that with a budget of just £5,000. Jeremy Bulloch, who played Boba Fett in Star Wars films and Edwin in the Cliff Richard movie Summer Holiday, appears in the film.

He plays Krissy's maths teacher in Musik, which aims to inspire people with dyslexia. It is about a teenage girl who is labelled 'stupid' and faces torment from bullies at school.

Producing

A fifth of the profits from sales will go to the British Dyslexia Association, which is promoting the film through its newsletters and magazines.

Dan, aged 22, of Swanfield Road, Wordsley, who specialises in producing corporate, commercial and training DVDs, music videos and films, shot 'Musik' at Pinewood Studios, The Wordsley School, The Brier special school in Kingswinford and a friend's mock medieval mansion in Lawnswood, Wordsley.

Krissy, played by 19-year-old Natasha Bennett – a Gornal singer whose stage name is Taisa – turns her life around by learning to play the saxophone, determined to show the world that being dyslexic does not stop her from being successful. Along the way viewers learn a lot more about how dyslexia is diagnosed – and that people with the condition are often intelligent, creative and successful.

The script was written by Dan's girlfriend, musician Joanne Naylor, aged 23, of Wolverhampton Road, Sedgley, who plays the saxophone.

"Joanne really researched the subject well, reading books about it and talking to people she knows with dyslexia," said Dan, who gained a BTEC National Diploma in media – moving image at Halesowen College. "We wanted to raise awareness that people with dyslexia are not stupid but have a different way of thinking and a different perspective on life. In our film Krissy, who is aged 15, comes out of her shell when she learns to play the saxophone and she enters a talent show at school."

The DVD costs £4.50, a download is 95p and downloadable streams are available for 45p (SD) or 60p (HD).

Underground fires were a real problem

Minnie Page in her smouldering garden, in 1956

Malcolm Price, in 1990

UNDERGROUND FIRE BREAKS OUT NEAR HOUSES
—At Dudley

A typical Express & Star headline on a fire in 1956

Smouldering gardens and sand hot enough to burn a boy's feet

UNDERGROUND fires are a persistent problem in coal-rich areas, and the Black Country and Staffordshire have had many.

They are easy to start –a bonfire near surface coal or just lightning can do it – and very difficult to put out.

And how do you know how far, and how deep, the fire extends?

Ringing them with trenches filled with concrete has worked, but what if the fire is partly outside the concrete barrier? It could burn downwards and then outwards beyond the concrete.

It could be years before anyone finds out – such is the slow and creeping nature of underground fires.

Melting

Worldwide there are two especially remarkable underground fires, in America and Australia.

In Pennsylvania, the ground under the town of Centralia has been burning since the 1960s. Its roads are melting, and the ground is caving in. Despite all efforts to stop the fire, the town had to be abandoned, and the fire burns on.

And in Australia, Burning Mountain is estimated to have been smouldering for 6,000 years. It is expected to burn for thousands more years yet.

In 1993, Cannock Chase councillors were worried about plans to build homes on the former Rugeley Aluminium works, because the ground had been on fire for up to 60 years.

Fire officer William Smith said: "Underground fires are always a problem, because you never know to what extent they are burning."

In Moxley in 1956, Minnie Page's garden spouted smoke. Drilling down 25ft, firefighters located and put out the fire.

Dudley was a particularly unlucky area in the 1950s and 1960s, with underground fires in Rowley Road and in Newark Road, Netherton. A further fire was found to underlie Watsons Green Road.

The Rowley Road fire affected new resident Mrs A.E Vanes, of Vauxhall Gardens. She said: "For an hour I helped my husband and my son to tip buckets of water on the spot. Next morning the smoke was there again."

The cost of all this is thankfully usually reckoned in damage to property rather than in injuries. But in 1990 16-year-old Malcolm Price of Wednesbury was hurt on Friar Park estate when he fell through hot sand on wasteland and burned his foot.

Burn

The problem goes on, and was summarised more than 50 years ago by Dudley engineer J.S. Evans: "The only way to stop the fires and save the houses was to cut them off completely and let themselves burn out," he said.

"Bore holes sometimes 30 feet deep have been made at a distance of 80 yards behind the houses. Into these we have injected a mixture of sand and cement.

"There should be no more trouble from the fires," he added.

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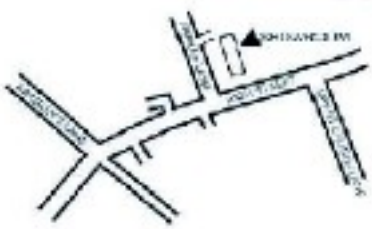

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Former staff from the Round Oak Steelworks are seen during a reunion event at Dudley Museum

The steelworks seen when it was still in operation and, right, an aerial view of the site in 1988

Furnace of friendship

Ex-workers, brothers Ron and Ken Walters, seen with artwork on display

Barry Thompson, Richard Wandless, Brendan Hawthorne and Steve Field

IT ONCE employed thousands of workers and the red glow of its hot furnaces would light up the Black Country sky at night as sparks, ash and the hiss of cooling metal filled the air.

Generations of Brierley Hill families had laboured in the open hearths at the landmark Round Oak steelworks since it began production in 1857 at the height of the Industrial Revolution.

When the famous furnaces closed in December 1982, it caused upset, anger and widespread unemployment.

Now, 28 years later, it has been replaced with smart glass-fronted offices and restaurants on the Waterfront complex and nearby farmland has been transformed into a busy modern shopping centre, bringing jobs back to the town.

But memories of years spent labouring at one of the Black Country's most famous steelworks came flooding back at a reunion for former workers, who still hold it dearly in their hearts.

More than 100 workers got together to remember the old days at a reunion at Dudley Museum and Art Galley earlier this month.

And it wasn't long before old friends starting reminiscing about what it was like working at the plant, which they fondly called the Old Lady.

The steelworks were a family affair for brothers Ken and Ron Walters, aged 66 and 63, who had both followed in the footsteps of their father David, a ladleman, who worked at the site for more than 40 years.

The pair spent their days in the open hearth, with Ken, of Gorsty Avenue, working for 12 years at the site while Ron, of Fenton Street was there a decade.

"My father started work there when he was 15 almost by accident," Ron said.

"He was hanging around the gates and a foreman spotted him and said 'you will do' and that was it, he became one of the workers.

"Because my father worked there, me and my brothers David and Ken went there too. It was a great place to work, you really felt part of something big.

"Round Oak closing had such huge impact on Brierley Hill. It was the heart and soul of the town and when it closed it left behind a ghost town, which has never fully recovered," said Ron.

Trevor Potter, Wally Fletcher, Len Jones, Tom Gray, Ernie Allen, Dennis Horton, in 1961

When Round Oak closed many workers struggled to find jobs elsewhere and as a last resort some opted to seek positions at steelworks overseas.

Friends John Bagley, aged 66, of Stourbridge, Edwards Mattocks, 73, and Peter Taylor, 67, both of Brierley Hill, went abroad to find work after the site closed.

"We all went around the world to find jobs, because there wasn't any work in this country," said Mr Bagley, who spent 20 years at Round Oak before spells working in Italy, Spain and Iceland.

"We were very sad when Round Oak closed. It was more than just a steelworks, it was a way of life.

"Men started work there when they 15 and stayed their until they retired.

"We used to call Round Oak the Old Lady and treated her with respect," said Mr Mattocks, who worked in the melting shops from 1952 to 1980.

Another long-serving worker was retired engineer Tony Shinner, of Norton Road, Stourbridge, who was at Round Oak from 1947 to 1981.

For the last 11 years, he was joined by his wife of 60 years, Betty, who was one of many women working in the offices.

"It was a happy place to work," she said.

"There was quite a lot of women working in the offices while then men were on the shop floor. I enjoyed my time there."

The reunion included an exhibition of old photographs and paintings of the Round Oak site as well as poetry readings paying homage to the site's importance in Brierley Hill.

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What would you do if someone collapsed?

Chris Feehan practises mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and, below puts a "casualty" into the recovery position

The majority of people would not feel confident trying to save a life, something the St John Ambulance wants to change. CHRIS FEEHAN joins one of its courses

CASUALLY stuffing her face with penny chews, she was completely oblivious to what was coming next.

She, like any other five-year-old, had a sweet tooth, and in her eagerness she bit off more than she could chew, or indeed swallow.

Suddenly, my little cousin was gagging, turning red, and unable to dislodge the brightly coloured sweet. My cousin was choking and I didn't have enough time to fetch help.

By fluke, my unorthodox version of the Mrs Doubtfire Heimlich Manoeuvre soon had her breathing again.

This was my first and only real experience of administering first aid.

Embarrassed at the thought of being unable to help somebody in need because of a lack of basic first aid knowledge, I decided to book myself onto a St John Ambulance course. Gareth May, St John Ambulance trainer at Wolverhampton's Wharf Street centre, said: "Over half (56%) of people in the West Midlands wouldn't feel confident trying to save a life,.

"A quarter (29%) would just wait for an ambulance, a third (33%) would try first aid even though they are not sure what to do, and just over a quarter (28%) say they'd know what first aid to do.

"But sadly, our research shows that many would do the wrong thing and could worsen things."

This April St John Ambulance launched The Difference campaign, which aims to encourage people to learn basic first aid skills which could make the difference between life and death.

According to statistics released by St John, 150,000 people die each year in situations where first aid could have given them a chance to live.

Gareth said: "We believe that anyone who needs first aid should receive it and yet, as our latest research shows, that's not happening. "We can't rely on other people to have the skills – everyone should take the responsibility to learn first aid themselves.

Surprised

"We can all be the difference between a life lost and a life saved."

The course taught me many life saving essentials, particularly how to keep an injured or ill person comfortable and alive until paramedics arrive.

I was surprised to learn that nearly everyone has placed somebody in the recovery position, usually to shove someone on their side to stop them from snoring.

When learning CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) I was faced with a limbless manikin and at first I was at a loss as to where to begin. Despite what you may have witnessed on Baywatch, often the injured party won't come round during CPR but it is essential to perform 30 compressions at a rate of 100 per minute followed by blowing into the person's mouth until their chest rises.

This should be repeated until the person begins the breath unaided, paramedics arrive or if you are too exhausted to continue.

In the session I was also taught how to perform the Heimlich manoeuvre, now known as abdominal thrust, how to treat cuts and burns and how to clear someone's airway.

Andy Griffiths, aged 24, from Penn, Wolverhampton, attended the course. He said "I was in the cubs when I was younger and learned first aid, so I already knew the basics but it is useful to refresh because you don't know what you might have forgotten.

Choking

"It's hard to say if I'd be able to use my first aid skills but I'm sure if push came to shove and someone's life was on the line I'd get stuck in. Everyone should have basic first aid training. It should be part of the national curriculum."

Knowledge of basic first aid certainly made the difference to Christine Knight, a 59-year-old from Kingswinford was out in Oldbury enjoying a meal with friends when she began choking. Her friends could do little more than offer her some water. Luckily a fellow diner saw the danger and performed several abdominal thrusts and was able to dislodge the food.

When a woman collapsed at Wolverhampton's civic hall recently there were three St John Ambulance volunteers on hand to take control of the situation until paramedics arrived. By using CPR the volunteers managed to get the woman's heart beating and saved her life.

St John Ambulance teaches people first aid so that they can be the difference between a life lost and a life saved. As the nation's leading first aid charity, it teaches more people first aid than any other organisation: each year, more than 800,000 complete a St John Ambulance training course.

Even so, fewer than one in 10 people have been trained in first aid.

You could be the difference between life and death. To find out how, visit www.SJA.org.uk or call 08700 10 49 50.

Chris Feehan practises his bandaging skills on a fellow trainee

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Minimum ages and rules for Learner drivers and riders

Before you learn to drive or ride a new vehicle make sure you know about the rules and restrictions that apply to you. Different vehicles have different minimum ages and restrictions.

Rules for Learner drivers

Before you start to drive, you must:

- hold a valid, provisional driving licence for Great Britain or Northern Ireland
- make sure the car you drive is roadworthy and properly taxed and insured

It is important to learn safe driving practice from the beginning of your driving career because bad habits are hard to break.
It is unlikely that anyone except an approved driving instructor (ADI) has the experience, knowledge and training to teach you properly. Learning safe driving habits from the start will save the safety of yourself and other road users.

If you want to practice your driving with an accompanying driver, the accompanying driver must be over the age of 21 and must have held (and still hold) a full licence, in the relevant vehicle category, for three years.

As a learner driver you must display 'L' plates ('L' or 'D' plates in Wales) in a conspicuous position on the front and rear of the vehicle you are driving.
Minimum age you can take a test

You can take your theory test once your provisional licence has become valid. Normally, for car drivers, the earliest date your provisional licence can become valid is your 17th birthday. You can apply for the licence up to three months before your 17th birthday however, you will still have to wait until your birthday before you can take your theory test.

For more information about applying for a provisional licence, please click on the link below.

Disability living allowance
If you are receiving disability living allowance at the higher rate your provisional licence will come into effect when you are 16, but you can apply for it within three months of your 16th birthday.

MOTORCYCLISTS
Direct access scheme
Direct access is a scheme which allows a person over the age of 21 to avoid the two year/30 kW/mt (kW) restriction by taking a test on a machine of at least 35 kW (48 Brake horse power (bhp)). It also allows you to ride a range of bikes. Any information given on a machine that exceeds the normal learner motorcycle specification must be supervised at all times by a certified motorcycle instructor who should be in radio contact. You should also wear fluorescent or reflective clothing and follow all other provisional licence restrictions.

Accelerated access
Riders who reach the age of 21 while still within the two year period where they are restricted to maximum 35 kW (35 bhp) machines, but who wish to ride larger bikes need to pass a further test on a motorcycle of at least 35 kW (46 bhp). They may operate on bikes over 35 kW (35 bhp) under the same provisional conditions for direct access riders.

You will revert to learner status while practising on a motorcycle greater than 35 kW (35 bhp) although test failure will not affect your existing licence.
Mopeds and tractors

If you want to ride a moped you can take your theory test when you are 16, but again you must make sure you have completed compulsory basic training (CBT) and have a valid provisional licence.
If you are 16 and already have a licence for a mopeds or a moped, this will give you provisional entitlement to drive car when you are 17.

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The Little Bangla, Langley High Street, near Oldbury, is rated by Harley E. Haley, who lives in Bowley Regis, says it is a smart, well-appointed establishment serving excellent Indian and Bangla-Indian food, and offers a varied menu.

"The menu is great and staff are very friendly and welcoming," he adds. "The place is very convenient, there is easy parking, and the food is very well thought out."

The innovative Oldbury restaurant above, Little Bangla, a Bangla-Indian restaurant which opened fairly recently on Langley High Street. "The food is superb or in the service, and besides the course of that form but a city centre," he says. "Reservation for a table is a must. I hope the high standard, customer and food service helping a small town in the Black Country look a bit ordinary standard."

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Choice

DERREN BROWN: BEHIND THE MISCHIEF
(Ch4, 9pm)

This may be an excuse for Channel 4 to re-screen a few Derren Brown specials, but there are some juicy tripping goodies here and there. Here's one off Behind the Mischief will celebrate the man and his amazing series, specials and events. Unprecedented access is given for the first time as he is followed, behind the scenes, and into his private life to meet his family, friends and closest collaborators. Celebrity fans, including Stephen Merchant, Matt Lucas, Simon Pegg, Bill Bailey, Simon Callow and Ade Wiley give their insights.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 Hugh Stone's Simple Suppers. (R) 12.00 BBC News; Regional News; Weather. 12.10 Football Focus. 1.00 Live Athletics: Coverage of the Great Edinburgh Cross-Country race at Holyrood Park. 3.30 Live Darts: BDO World Championships. The first semi-final at the Lakeside Country Club. 5.30 First Score. 5.35 BBC News; Regional News; Weather. 5.50 The Impressions Show with Culshaw and Stephenson. (R)

6.40 **All Star Total Wipeout.** Hero series. Adventure game show hosted by Richard Hammond and Amanda Byram.

7.30 **The Inspirations.** With Peter Jones, Kate Bottomley and Amanda Byram.

8.00 **The National Lottery: Lotto Draw.** Live draw including the all-important numbers.

8.30 **Casualty.** A confrontation between Adam and Warren spells trouble for Kirsty.

9.30 **Gran Fly with Me.** Airport documentary spoof, starring Matt Lucas and David Walliams. (R)

10.10 **BBC Olympic Weekend;** National Lottery Update.

10.20 **FILE: Hellboy: The Crooked Man.** (2007) Adventure sequel starring Nicolas Cage, Helen Mirren, Ed Harris, Harry Knittel and Jon Wright. Weather follows.

11.40 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Breakfast. 7.00 CBeebies. 10.00 The Sports Night. (R) 10.30 Mister, She Wrote. (R) 11.00 This Life: I'm a Doctor. 11.45 Escape to the Country. (R) 12.15 Film: Gigi. (1958) Glamorous musical starring Leslie Caron. 1.40 Live Darts: BDO World Championships. The second semi-final at the Lakeside Country Club.

4.40 **The Great Family Cook Off.** Gordon Buchanan follows a family of wild food lovers for a year.

5.10 **The Chilling of the Lovejoy Brothers' Stolen.** The persona testimonies of an survivors of the 1984-2 robbery.

6.00 **Shooting the Hollywood Stars.**

6.40 **QI XL.** An extended version of the quiz with surprises. (R)

8.00 **FILE: The Film Revolution.** (2007) Premiere. A rather sequence to life have country of Afghanistan to find a World, missing person and stories for a children of betrayal. Drama, starring Khalid Abdalla and Atossa Leoni.

10.00 **Take the Ride to Scotland.** Mary McTrotter, Dom Gil Berry and Gill Rings Jones head to the Highlands and Islands. (R)

11.00 Film: Lonesome Jim. (2005) Comedy drama, starring Casey Affleck. 1.15 Film: Gus: Mighty Chihuahua. (1999) Family drama, starring Marty Stevenburgen. 4.00 Close.

ITV1

6.00 ITV: The Ricky Gervais Show. 7.00 Tomorrow's Sheet. 10.00 This Morning. Saturday. 12.15 ITV News; Weather. 12.20 Live FA Cup Football. Arsenal v Leeds United (Kick-off 12.15pm). 3.20 Athletics: Do the Punctuation Things. (R) 4.20 Film: Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace. (1999) Sci-fi prequel, starring Liam Neeson and Ewan McGregor.

4.00 **England Performances.**

6.10 **ITV News; Weather.**

6.20 **Harry Hill's the Best of TV Party.**

7.00 **Filthy Rich.** Incredibly recovers in mysterious world on trying to fleeting through an anomaly and the pair are later forced to undergo a terrifying confrontation with a deadly alien and dinosaur.

8.00 **Take the Cake.** An actor, a Michael Jackson impersonator, an office manager and a roller blind theory to impress 30 single women, and that we also couples go another dress.

9.10 **Piers Morgan's Life Stories: Cheryl Cole.** The X Factor judge talks about her divorce and battle with rehab. (R)

10.10 **ITV News; Weather.**

10.20 **ITV City Highlights.**

10.40 The Gales: Celebrity Special. 11.00 The Zone: Shopping and listening during TV News Headlines. 12.00 The Barber Wife. 2.30 ITV Nightscreen. 3.40 ITV Morning News.

Channel 4

6.00 The Beverly Hillbillies (R) 6.30 The Hogan's. (R) 6.55 The Hogan's. (R) 7.00 GT Academy (R) 7.55 Pre-sports on 4. 7.55 The Morning Line. 8.00 T4: Live and Lost. (R) 8.00 T4: Friends (R) 9.00 T4: Friends. (R) 9.55 T4: The Great Hotel; T4: Movie Special. 10.30 T4: Forensic and Fearless. (R) 11.30 T4: The Big Bang Theory (R) 12.25 T4: The Big Bang Theory (R) 1.20 Channel 4 Racing 1.40 Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R) 4.25 Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R) 5.00 Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R) 5.40 Come Dine with Me Extra Portions. (R)

6.30 **Channel 4 News.**

6.37 **Weather.**

6.40 **FILE: Iron Man.** (2008) An arms manufacturer invents a high-tech suit of armour and uses it in the fight against evil across the globe. Superhero adventure, starring Robert Downey Jr and Jeff Bridges.

9.00 **Dexter: Dressed to Kill: Bloodbath.** An insight into the fictitious life.

9.30 **Dexter: Dressed: Viewers' Choice.** A selected programme as selected by the Showtime fans.

10.10 **Dexter: Dressed: Bolgers.** The fictitious performance at the New Wimbledon Theatre in London. (R)

11.00 Film: Beyond the Valley of the Dolls. (1970) Comedy with Dolly Read. 2.40 Dirty Sexy Money. (R) 3.25 The Confession. (R) 3.30 Brothers & Sisters. (R) 4.20 Beauty and the Geek. (R) 5.00 Cell Mate. (R)

Channel 5

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 K-9. 10.15 Great Film Reviews: 2010. 10.25 Demolition: The Super Stadium. (R) 10.45 Goodnight Lark Secrets Revealed. (R) 11.15 Film: The Deerslayer. (1978) John Ferdin Western, starring John Wayne. 4.00 Film: The Naked Spur. (1953) Western, starring James Stewart. 5.45 Film: Brannigan. (1975) Detective thriller, starring John Wayne.

7.00 **Five News.**

7.30 **BCS.** Bishopsgate strike and Halloween, wounding a Minister sergeant and arresting his daughter while Ashley enjoys everyone's returning up of the fair in a revealing fancy-dress costume. (R)

8.00 **CSI: Miami.** Horatio is shocked to learn that the prime suspect in a murder and hostage case may be his son.

9.00 **CSI: NY.** New series. The team celebrates when Lindsay receives a medal for bravery and is reunited with Jo Danielle Stokes, in fact Lindsay in the crime bit on her first day in the role.

10.00 **CSI: Crime Scene Investigation.** A man shooted no an client is found dead. (R)

11.15 **Fantastic Films.** (R)

12.15 Super Casino. 1.00 Nikita Dead. (R) 1.50 Made in Movement. (R) 2.00 Hands Helpline. (R) 2.30 The Milkshake! Show. (R) 3.15 Thomas & Friends. (R) 3.40 Fairy the Racing Car. (R)

Digital

ITV2
6.00 Take Me Out: Best of. 7.00 Film: Catwoman. (2004) 9.00 Film: Die Another Day. (2002) James Bond goes a-hunting, starring Pierce Brosnan. 11.00 Sex Bitches. 12.00 The Comedy Awards 2010. 1.00 Film: Hot Rise. (2007) Action comedy starring Simon Pegg.

ITV3
6.00 A Touch of Frost. 8.00 Inspector Morse. 9.00 Runaway & Tigers. 9.00 Midsomer Murders. 11.00 Murder in Mind.

ITV4
9.00 Film: The Appaloosa. (1966) 11.00 Film: The Great Escape. (1963) 2.00 The Professionals. 3.00 Bullet Proof. 4.00 Ultimate Force. 5.00 Film: A Change of Man. (2010)

BBC THREE
7.00 Film: Cop. (2009) 9.00 Film: The Iron Man. (2010) Rich's arrogant billionaire, with the voice of Gary Tilbrook. 11.00 Live at the Apollo. 12.00 Family Guy.

BBC FOUR
7.00 Penelope Keith and the Foot Lady. 8.00 Timeshift: The Golden Age of Grand Travel. 9.00 The Great Life of Bob Monkhouse. 10.00 Chopsticks. 11.00 Film: Girl with a Pearl Earring. (2003)

E4
9.00 Hollyoaks. 9.00 Made in Chelsea. 10.00 Friends: Icons: The Big Bang Theory. 2.00 How I Met Your Mother. 2.30 Friends. 3.00 The Greatest TV Shows of the Noughties. 4.00 The Greatest Songs of the Noughties.

FILM4
9.00 Honey I Blew Up the Kid. (1992) 10.50 Speed & Grease Gasbol. (1977) 12.30 Tower Heist. (1981) Comedy, starring Tim Hardie. 1.00 Up, Super Bo Gritter 4. (2009) Fantasy comedy, starring Uma Thurman. 3.00 Cocoa. (1988) Horror, starring Pierce Brosnan.

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Sunday TV

Choice

WILD AT HEART

(ITV1, 8.30pm).

We're only just over a week into the new year, but Sundays are already feeling rather warm and cosy. Over on BBC One, Lark Rise to Candleford is back, and ITV1 is not only launching a new series of Dancing on Ice, but also Wild at Heart. Yes, you may have thought it had just about run its course, but no – and the twist at the start of the opening episode is that the action does not take place in the usual South African setting, but that everyone has decamped to London. Danny and Alice are on honeymoon there, and he uses the time to meet up with his estranged father Robert, who deserted him 20 years ago after leaving his mother. Stephen Tompkinson stars.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast 9.00 The Andrew Marr Show 10.00 The Big Questions 11.00 Country Tracks 12.00 BBC News 12.15 Escape to the Country (R) 1.15 Bargain Hunt Famous Finds (R) 1.55 EastEnders 3.20 Polar Bear: Spy on the Ice (R) 4.20 Songs of Praise 5.00 BBC News; Regional News; Weather 5.40 Jimmy's Food Factory (R)

6.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce and the team visit The Sage Gateshead, where they examine a phonograph and medallions. (R)

7.00 Countryfile. Julia Bradbury and Adam Henson visit Lancashire.

8.00 Lark Rise to Candleford. New series. Dorcas is intrigued by a newcomer to Candleford.

9.00 Zen. The death of an aristocrat prompts Zen to investigate a secretive organisation – but powerful figures seem determined to keep the truth hidden. Drama, starring Rufus Sewell.

10.30 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

10.50 [illegible]. Ross and Mick host a beer and curry night. (R)

11.25 FILM: Serendipity. (2001) Drama, starring Kate Beckinsale; Weather.

12.55 Sign Zone: Coast (R) 1.55 Holby City (R) 2.55 Donald Trump: All-American Billionaire (R) 4.20 BBC News

BBC2

6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 10.00 Something for the Weekend 11.30 Film: A Distant Trumpet (1964) Western, starring Troy Donahue. 1.15 Live Snooker: The Masters. Mark Selby v Mark King. 3.00 Ski Sunday 3.45 Live Darts: BBC World Championships. The final at the Lakeside Country Club.

8.00 Coast. Team explores the Inner and Outer Hebrides. (R)

9.00 Arctic with Bruce Parry. The explorer discovers how Inuit communities in the far north of Greenland rely on traditional hunting and learns how global warming is transforming the lives of Arctic natives.

10.00 FILM: The Men Who Stare at Goats. (2009) Premiere. A journalist posted to Iraq learns the bizarre story of a covert experiment to train soldiers with psychic powers. Satirical comedy with George Clooney, Ewan McGregor and Kevin Spacey.

11.30 Three Men Go to Scotland. Conclusion. Rory McGrath, Dara O Briain and Griff Rhys Jones continue their adventure in the Hebrides, visiting Fingal's Cave and Britain's most remote pub. (R)

12.30 Snooker: The Masters. 1.20 Snooker Extra. 3.20 BBC News. 3.35 Close.

ITV1

6.00 CITV: The Fluffy Club 7.55 Toonattik 9.25 The Crocodile Hunter Diaries (R) 9.55 FA Cup Highlights (R) 11.20 ITV News; Weather 11.30 This Morning Sunday 12.30 You've Been Framed! (R) 1.00 Live FA Cup Football. Manchester United v Liverpool (Kick-off 1.30pm). 4.00 Midsomer Murders (R) 5.40 Harry Hill's the Best of TV Burp (R)

6.30 Regional Programmes.

6.45 ITV News; Weather.

7.00 Dancing on Ice. New series. In a change from previous years, Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present the first live rounds in which viewers choose the line-up for the main competition. The results can be seen at 9.30pm.

8.30 Wild at Heart. New series. Danny agrees to meet his estranged father Robert (Warren Clarke).

9.30 Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off. The three least popular couples have to skate again.

10.15 That Sunday Night Show. New series. The past seven days' biggest news stories, with Adrian Chiles and guests.

11.15 ITV News; Weather.

11.30 FA Cup Highlights. Action from today's third round ties.

12.40 Premiership Rugby Union 12.35 The Zone; ITV News Headlines 3.00 October Road (R) 3.50 ITV Nightscreen 5.30 ITV Morning News

Channel 4

6.00 The Treacle People (R) 6.10 The Hoobs (R) 6.35 The Hoobs (R) 7.00 The Great Space Sudoku (R) 7.50 T4: Live and Loud (R) 7.55 T4: Friends (R) 8.40 T4: Friends (R) 9.00 T4: Hollyoaks 11.50 T4: 4Music Meets Glee (R) 12.55 T4: The Simpsons (R) 1.30 T4: The Simpsons (R) 1.55 Jamie's 30 Minute Meals (R) 2.20 Jamie's 30 Minute Meals (R) 2.55 Jamie's 30 Minute Meals (R) 4.25 Jamie's 30 Minute Meals (R) 4.55 Jamie's 30 Minute Meals (R) 4.30 Deal or No Deal 5.15 Film: Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging (2008) Premiere. Comedy drama, starring Georgia Groome.

7.30 Channel 4 News.

7.55 4thought.tv

8.00 Dispatches: The Battle for Haiti. Efforts to recapture convicts who escaped prison during Haiti's 2010 earthquake.

9.00 FILM: Run Fatboy Run. (2007) A man who regrets leaving his fiancee standing at the altar tries to prove his love for her by running the London Marathon. Romantic comedy, starring Simon Pegg and Thandie Newton.

10.55 Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2010. Teams of celebrities answer questions on the year just gone. (R)

1.00 Newlywedz: The One Year Itch (R) 1.55 My Weird & Wonderful Family (R) 2.30 Lucky Escape (R) 3.55 Coming Up: Would Like to Meet 4.25 Enough 4.30 Wedding House 5.25 Brothers & Sisters 6.15 ER (R)

Channel 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig 6.05 Roary the Racing Car (R) 6.15 Fifi and the Flowertots (R) 6.25 Fireman Sam (R) 6.35 Miss Spider's Sunny Patch Friends (R) 6.50 The Beeps (R) 7.00 Mio Mao (R) 7.05 Olivia (R) 7.15 Harry and His Bucket Full of Dinosaurs (R) 7.25 Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures (R) 7.30 Make Way for Noddy (R) 7.45 The WotWots (R) 7.55 Little Princess (R) 8.10 Castle Farm (R) 8.15 The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky (R) 8.25 Fireball (R) 8.30 Rupert Bear (R) 8.55 Olivia (R) 9.10 The Mr Men Show (R) 9.30 The Milkshake! Show (R) 10.00 K-9 10.45 The Archie Files Story (R) 11.00 How Do They Do It? (R) 11.30 There's a Rhino in My House (R) 12.30 Titanic: The True Story (R) 1.30 Film: Mary Higgins Clark's Remember Me (1995) Psychological thriller, starring Kelly McGillis. 3.25 Film: The Princess Bride (1987) Comic fantasy adventure, starring Cary Elwes. 5.15 Five News. 5.20 Film: Dr Dolittle 2 (2001) Comedy sequel, starring Eddie Murphy.

7.05 FILM: Charlie's Angels. (2000) Adventure with Drew Barrymore.

9.00 FILM: The Long Kiss Goodnight. (1996) Action thriller, starring Geena Davis.

11.20 FILM: Until Death. (2007)

1.20 SuperCasino. 4.00 Nick's Quest (R) 4.30 Made in [illegible] (R) 5.00 Hana's Helpline (R) 5.10 The Milkshake! Show (R) 5.25 Thomas & Friends (R) 5.45 Roary the Racing Car (R)

Digital

ITV2

[illegible] Dancing on Ice: Final 8.00 Take Me Out [illegible] Film: [illegible] 11.00 Film: The Last Samurai (2003)

ITV3

1.45 A Touch of Frost 4.40 Film: Are You Being Served? (1977) 6.45 Agatha Christie's Poirot 8.00 The Return of Sherlock Holmes 9.00 Foyle's War 11.00 Film: Sherlock Holmes: Hands of a Murderer (1990)

ITV4

[illegible] Film: [illegible] 1.45 Film: 633 Squadron (1964) 3.00 The Sweeney 4.00 Premiership Rugby Union 6.40 Film: [illegible] 11.40 Film: The Beast (1984)

BBC THREE

7.00 Doctor Who 8.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out 8.30 Film: WALL-E (2008) A robot cleaning a deserted future Earth falls in love with a survey droid and follows her on a journey into space. Pixar animated adventure, with the voice of Ben Burtt. 10.05 Family Guy 10.25 American Dad 10.50 Sun, Sex and Suspicious Parents

BBC FOUR

7.00 The [illegible] 8.00 Dan Snow's Norman Walks 8.30 Johnny Kingdom's Year with the Birds 9.00 Still Folk Dancing After All These Years 10.00 Film: [illegible] (2000) Premiere. Romantic comedy, starring Audrey Tautou and [illegible]. 11.40 [illegible]

E4

[illegible] Film: Grease (1978) [illegible] Friends [illegible] Friends [illegible] Film: [illegible] (2010) [illegible] The Inbetweeners

FILM4

2.10 The Beverly Hillbillies (1993) 4.00 Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953) 6.00 Planet of the Apes (1968) 8.00 The Hunt for Red October (1990) 11.00 [illegible] (2008)

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Monday

BBC1 6.00 Breakfast. 9.15 Wanted Down Under. 10.00 Homes Under the Hammer; BBC News; Weather. 11.00 Saints and Scroungers. 11.45 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) BBC News; Weather. 12.15 Bargain Hunt. 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.30 Regional News; Weather. 1.45 Doctors. 2.15 Cash in the Celebrity Attic. 3.00 BBC News; Weather; Regional News. 3.05 CBBC. 5.15 Weakest Link. 6.00 BBC News; Weather. 6.30 Regional News Programmes; Weather. 7.00 The One Show. 7.30 Inside Out; BBC News; Regional News. 8.00 EastEnders. 8.30 Too Much Too Young: Panorama. 9.00 Silent Witness. 10.00 BBC News. 10.25 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 A Question of Sport. 11.05 The Graham Norton Show. (R) 11.50 Film: Under the Mud. (2006); Weatherview. 1.20 Sign Zone: Giles & Sue Live The Good Life. (R) 2.20 The Story of Science – Power, Proof and Passion. (R) 3.20 Filthy Rotten Scoundrels. (R) 4.05 BBC News.

BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 Animal Park. (R) 12.00 Daily Politics. 12.30 GMT with George Alagiah. 1.00 Ready Steady Cook. (R) 1.25 Coast. 1.30 Live Snooker: The Masters. 4.30 Pointless. (R) 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. 7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. 8.00 University Challenge. 8.30 Baking Made Easy. 9.00 Horizon: What Is One Degree? 10.00 Episodes. 10.30 Newsnight. 11.20 Snooker: The Masters. 12.10 American Football. 1.10 Snooker Extra. 3.10 BBC News. 4.05 Close.

ITV1 6.00 Daybreak. 8.30 Lorraine. 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. 10.30 This Morning. 12.30 Loose Women. 1.30 ITV News; Weather. 1.55 Regional News; Weather. 2.00 May the Best House Win. 3.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. 3.50 Regional Weather. 4.00 Doc Martin. (R) 5.00 The Chase. 6.00 Regional News; Weather. 6.30 ITV News; Weather. 7.00 Emmerdale. 7.30 Coronation Street. 8.00 The Lakes. 8.30 Coronation Street. 9.00 The Biggest Loser. 10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather. 10.30 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 The Zoo. (R) 11.35 That Sunday Night Show. (R) 12.05 Grimefighters. (R) 12.30 The Zone; ITV News Headlines. 2.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) 3.25 ITV Nightscreen. 5.30 ITV Morning News.

Channel 4 6.05 Sell Mail. (R) 6.10 The Treacle People. (R) 6.20 The Hoobs. (R) 6.45 The Hoobs. (R) 7.15 Freshly Squeezed. 7.30 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.05 Frasier. (R) 8.35 According to Jim. (R) 9.05 Supernanny USA. (R) 10.00 Film: Three Coins in the Fountain. (1954) Romantic drama, starring Dorothy McGuire. 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary. 12.05 Three in a Bed. 12.30 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.35 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.40 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 3.10 Countdown. 3.55 Deal or No Deal. 5.00 Celebrity Five Go To. 6.00 The Simpsons. (R) 6.30 Hollyoaks. 7.00 Channel 4 News. 7.55 4thought.tv. 8.00 Celebrity Come Dine with Me. 9.00 One Born Every Minute. 10.00 Shameless. 11.05 Britain's Fattest Man. (R) 12.10 Music on 4: Beady Eye: Video Exclusive. 12.15 Premier League Poker. 1.15 The Genius of British Art. (R) 2.10 Titanic: The Mission. (R) 3.05 Britain's Trillion Pound Horror Story. (R) 4.35 Brothers & Sisters. (R) 5.20 ER. (R)

Channel 5 6.00 Milkshake! 9.15 The Wright Stuff. 11.00 The Vanessa Show. 11.45 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 12.40 Five News. 12.45 Emergency Bikers. (R) 1.45 Neighbours. 2.15 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 3.10 Film: Plague City: Sars in Toronto. (2005) Fact-based drama, starring Karl Malchett. 5.00 Five News at 5; Weather. 5.30 Neighbours. (R) 6.00 Monkey Life. 6.25 Live from Studio Five. 7.00 Five News at 7. 7.30 How Do They Do It?; Five News Update. 8.00 Eddie Stobart: Trucks, Trailers and Trains; Five News at 9. 9.00 Film: Payback. (1999) A small-time crook takes on a crime syndicate in pursuit of money he is owed by his wife and partner. Thriller, with Mel Gibson and Kris Kristofferson. 11.05 Film: Vampires: Los Muertos. (2002) Horror sequel, starring Jon Bon Jovi. 1.00 SuperCasino. 4.00 How Not to Decorate. (R) 4.45 HouseBusters. (R) 5.10 Wildlife SOS. (R) 5.35 House Doctor. (R)

Tuesday

BBC1 6.00 Breakfast. 9.15 Wanted Down Under. 10.00 Homes Under the Hammer; BBC News; Weather. 11.00 Saints and Scroungers. 11.45 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) BBC News; Weather. 12.15 Bargain Hunt. (R) 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.30 Regional News; Weather. 1.45 Doctors. 2.15 Cash in the Celebrity Attic. 3.00 BBC News; Weather; Regional News. 3.05 CBBC. 5.15 Weakest Link. (R) 6.00 BBC News; Weather. 6.30 Regional News Programmes; Weather. 7.00 The One Show. 7.30 EastEnders; BBC News; Regional News. 8.00 Holby City. 9.00 Silent Witness. 10.00 BBC News. 10.25 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 Motorway Cops. 11.35 Film: The Big Man. (1990) Boxing drama, starring Liam Neeson; Weatherview. 1.35 Sign Zone: Alan Titchmarsh's Garden Secrets. (R) 2.35 DIY SOS: The Big Build – Nottingham. (R) 3.35 Filthy Rotten Scoundrels. (R) 4.20 Climbing Great Buildings. (R) 4.50 BBC News.

BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 Animal Park. (R) 12.00 Daily Politics. 12.30 GMT with George Alagiah. 1.00 Ready Steady Cook. (R) 1.25 Coast. (R) 1.30 Live Snooker: The Masters. Ronnie O'Sullivan v Mark Allen. 4.30 Pointless. (R) 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. 7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. Stephen Maguire v Marco Fu. 7.30 Match of the Day Live: West Ham United v Birmingham City (kick-off 7.45pm). 10.00 Have I Got Old News for You. (R) 10.30 Newsnight; Weather. 11.20 Snooker: The Masters. 12.10 Snooker Extra. 2.10 BBC News. 4.50 Close.

ITV1 6.00 Daybreak. 8.30 Lorraine. 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. 10.30 This Morning. 12.30 Loose Women. 1.30 ITV News; Weather. 1.55 Regional News; Weather. 2.00 May the Best House Win. 3.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. 3.50 Regional Weather. 4.00 Doc Martin. (R) 5.00 The Chase. 6.00 Regional News; Weather. 6.30 ITV News; Weather. 7.00 Emmerdale. 7.30 Grimefighters. 8.00 The Secret Mediterranean with Trevor McDonald. 9.00 Taggart. 10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather. 10.30 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 Film: Children of Men. (2006) Futuristic thriller, starring Clive Owen. 12.35 The Zone; ITV News Headlines. 2.35 Crossing Jordan. 3.20 ITV Nightscreen. 5.30 ITV Morning News.

Channel 4 6.10 The Treacle People. (R) 6.20 The Hoobs. (R) 6.45 The Hoobs. (R) 7.10 Freshly Squeezed. 7.30 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.05 Frasier. (R) 8.35 According to Jim. (R) 9.05 Supernanny USA. (R) 10.00 Film: Love Is a Many Splendored Thing. (1955) Fact-based romantic drama, with William Holden and Jennifer Jones. 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary. 12.05 Three in a Bed. 12.30 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.35 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.40 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 3.10 Countdown. 3.55 Deal or No Deal. 5.00 Celebrity Five Go To. 6.00 The Simpsons. (R) 6.30 Hollyoaks. 7.00 Channel 4 News. 7.55 4thought.tv. 8.00 The Secret Millionaire Changed My Life. 9.00 Hugh's Big Fish Fight. 10.00 Shameless. 11.10 The Big Bang Theory. 11.40 The Big Bang Theory. 12.15 European Poker Tour. 1.15 Freesports on 4. (R) 1.40 World B-Boy Series. (R) 2.05 Beach Volleyball. 2.55 KOTV. 3.25 Triathlon ITU World Championship Series. (R) 4.15 Abu Dhabi International Triathlon. (R) 5.10 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor. (R)

Channel 5 6.00 Milkshake! 9.15 The Wright Stuff. 11.00 The Vanessa Show. 11.45 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. 12.40 Five News. 12.45 Emergency Bikers. 1.45 Neighbours. 2.15 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 3.05 Film: I Do (But I Don't). (2004) Drama, starring Denise Richards. 5.00 Five News at 5; Weather. 5.30 Neighbours. (R) 6.00 Monkey Life. 6.25 Live from Studio Five. 7.00 Five News at 7. 7.30 Zoo Days. (R) Five News Update. 8.00 Jack the Ripper – The Definitive Story; Five News at 9. 9.00 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. 10.00 CSI: Miami. (R) 10.55 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. 11.55 True CSI. 12.55 SuperCasino. 4.00 How Not to Decorate. (R) 4.45 HouseBusters. (R) 5.10 Wildlife SOS. (R) 5.35 House Doctor. (R)

Wednesday

BBC1 6.00 Breakfast. 9.15 Wanted Down Under. 10.00 Homes Under the Hammer; BBC News; Weather. 11.00 Saints and Scroungers. 11.45 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) BBC News; Weather. 12.15 Bargain Hunt. 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.30 Regional News; Weather. 1.45 Doctors. 2.15 Cash in the Celebrity Attic. 3.00 BBC News; Weather; Regional News. 3.05 CBBC. 5.15 Weakest Link. 6.00 BBC News; Weather. 6.30 Regional News Programmes; Weather. 7.00 The One Show. 7.30 Rip Off Britain. (R) BBC News; Regional News. 8.10 Film: Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. (1984) Action adventure sequel, starring Harrison Ford. 10.00 BBC News. 10.25 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 The National Lottery: Wednesday Night Draws. 10.45 Film 2011 with Claudia Winkleman; National Lottery Update. 11.25 The League Cup Show. 12.05 Film: Timecop. (1994) Sci-fi adventure, starring Jean-Claude Van Damme; Weatherview. 1.45 Sign Zone: Country Tracks. (R) 2.40 Ian Hislop's Age of the Do-Gooders. (R) 3.40 Turn Back Time – The High Street. (R) 4.40 BBC News.

BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 Daily Politics. 1.00 See Hear. 1.30 Live Snooker: The Masters. Neil Robertson v Stephen Hendry. 4.30 Pointless. (R) 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. 7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. Shaun Murphy v Jamie Cope. 8.00 Michel Roux's Service. 9.00 Edwardian Farm. 10.00 Never Mind the Buzzcocks. (R) 10.30 Newsnight; Weather. 11.20 Snooker: The Masters. 12.10 Snooker Extra. 2.10 BBC News. 4.40 Close.

ITV1 6.00 Daybreak. 8.30 Lorraine. 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. 10.30 This Morning. 12.30 Loose Women. 1.30 ITV News; Weather. 1.55 Regional News; Weather. 2.00 May the Best House Win. 3.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. 3.50 Regional Weather. 4.00 Doc Martin. (R) 5.00 The Chase. 6.00 Regional News; Weather. 6.30 ITV News; Weather. 7.00 Emmerdale. 7.30 The Unforgettable Pat Phoenix. (R) 8.00 Midsomer Murders. 10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather. 10.30 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 Film: Constantine. (2005) Supernatural thriller, starring Keanu Reeves. 12.45 The Zone; ITV News Headlines. 2.50 Film: Out for Justice. (1991) Action thriller, with Steven Seagal. 4.20 ITV Nightscreen. 5.30 ITV Morning News.

Channel 4 6.00 Yo Gabba Gabba! (R) 6.25 The Hoobs. (R) 6.50 The Hoobs. (R) 7.15 Freshly Squeezed. 7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.10 Frasier. (R) 8.40 According to Jim. (R) 9.10 Supernanny USA. (R) 10.00 Film: Doctor in Distress. (1963) Hospital comedy, starring Dirk Bogarde. 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary. 12.05 Three in a Bed. (R) 12.35 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.35 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.40 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 3.10 Countdown. 3.55 Deal or No Deal. 5.00 Celebrity Five Go To. 5.55 Jamie's Fish Supper. 6.00 The Simpsons. (R) 6.30 Hollyoaks. 7.00 Channel 4 News. 7.55 4thought.tv. 8.00 Arthur's Hell on High Water. 8.55 Jamie's Fish Supper. 9.00 Hugh's Big Fish Fight. 10.00 Shameless. 11.10 Film: Teenage Paparazzo. (2010) Premiere. Documentary about a 14-year-old photographer. 1.00 My Family's Crazy Gap Year. (R) 1.55 Film: Gregory's Two Girls. (1999) 3.50 Brothers & Sisters. (R) 4.35 Hill Street Blues. (R) 5.25 Countdown. (R)

Channel 5 6.00 Milkshake! 9.15 The Wright Stuff. 11.00 The Vanessa Show. 11.45 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 12.40 Five News. 12.45 Emergency Bikers. (R) 1.45 Neighbours. 2.15 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 3.10 Film: Murder 101. (2006) 5.00 Five News at 5; Weather. 5.30 Neighbours. (R) 6.00 Monkey Life. 6.25 Live from Studio Five. 7.00 Five News at 7. 7.30 How Do They Do It?; Five News Update. 8.00 Battle of Britain: The Lost Evidence; Five News at 9. 9.00 NCIS. 10.00 Law & Order: Criminal Intent. (R) 10.55 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. (R) 11.55 Poker. 12.50 SuperCasino. 4.00 How Not to Decorate. (R) 4.45 HouseBusters. (R) 5.10 Wildlife SOS. (R) 5.35 House Doctor. (R)

Thursday

BBC1 6.00 Breakfast. 9.15 Wanted Down Under. 10.00 Homes Under the Hammer; BBC News; Weather. 11.00 Saints and Scroungers. 11.45 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) BBC News; Weather. 12.15 Bargain Hunt. 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.30 Regional News; Weather. 1.45 Doctors. 2.15 Cash in the Celebrity Attic. 3.00 BBC News; Weather; Regional News. 3.05 CBBC. 5.15 Weakest Link. (R) 6.00 BBC News; Weather. 6.30 Regional News Programmes; Weather. 7.00 The One Show. 7.30 EastEnders; BBC News; Regional News. 8.00 Human Planet. 9.00 Come Fly with Me. 9.30 Not Going Out. 10.00 BBC News. 10.25 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 Question Time. 11.35 This Week; Sitting Weatherview. 12.25 Sign Zone: Too Much Too Young: Panorama. (R) 12.55 Countryfile. (R) 1.55 Antiques Roadshow. (R) 2.55 Turn Back Time – The High Street. (R) 3.55 BBC News.

BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 Animal Park. (R) 12.00 Daily Politics. 12.30 GMT with George Alagiah. 1.00 Ready Steady Cook. (R) 1.25 Coast. 1.30 Live Snooker: The Masters. The first quarter-final. 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. 7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. The second quarter-final. 8.00 Michel Roux's Service. 9.00 Men of Rock. 10.00 The Great Outdoors. 10.30 Newsnight; Weather. 11.20 Snooker: The Masters. 12.10 Snooker Extra. 2.10 BBC News. 4.55 Close.

ITV1 6.00 Daybreak. 8.30 Lorraine. 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. 10.30 This Morning. 12.30 Loose Women. 1.30 ITV News; Weather. 1.55 Regional News; Weather. 2.00 May the Best House Win. 3.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. 3.50 Regional Weather. 4.00 Doc Martin. (R) 5.00 The Chase. 6.00 Regional News; Weather. 6.30 ITV News; Weather. 7.00 Emmerdale. 7.30 Can You Keep a Secret?: Tonight. 8.00 Emmerdale. 8.30 Coronation Street. 9.00 Kidnap and Ransom. 10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather. 10.30 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 Odd One In. (R) 11.20 Send in the Dogs. (R) 12.15 The Zone; ITV News Headlines. 2.15 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) 3.10 Can You Keep a Secret?: Tonight. (R) 3.35 ITV Nightscreen. 5.30 ITV Morning News.

Channel 4 6.10 The Hoobs. (R) 6.35 The Hoobs. (R) 7.00 Freshly Squeezed. 7.30 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.55 Frasier. (R) 8.25 Frasier. (R) 8.50 According to Jim. (R) 9.20 Supernanny USA. (R) 10.15 Film: Genevieve. (1953) Comedy, starring Dinah Sheridan. 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary. 12.05 Three in a Bed. (R) 12.35 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 1.35 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.05 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 2.40 Come Dine with Me Down Under. (R) 3.10 Countdown. 3.55 Deal or No Deal. 4.55 Jamie's Fish Supper. 5.00 Celebrity Five Go To. 6.00 The Simpsons. (R) 6.30 Hollyoaks. 7.00 Channel 4 News. 7.55 4thought.tv. 8.00 Relocation, Relocation. 8.55 Jamie's Fish Supper. 9.00 Hugh's Big Fish Fight. 9.55 Jamie's Fish Supper. 10.00 Shameless. 11.10 Film: Hot Shots! (1991) Action movie spoof, starring Charlie Sheen. 12.45 4Music: 4Play: British Sea Power. 1.00 Live and Lost. (R) 1.25 Orchestra United. (R) 3.15 The Untold Great Fire of London. (R) 4.10 Brothers & Sisters. (R) 4.55 Countdown. (R) 5.40 Yo Gabba Gabba! (R)

Channel 5 6.00 Milkshake! 9.15 The Wright Stuff. 11.00 The Vanessa Show. 11.45 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 12.40 Five News. 12.45 Emergency Bikers. (R) 1.45 Neighbours. 2.15 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 3.05 Film: Trust. (2009) Premiere. Mystery, starring Jamie Luner. 5.00 Five News at 5; Weather. 5.30 Neighbours. (R) 6.00 Monkey Life. 6.25 Live from Studio Five. 7.00 Five News at 7. 7.30 Monkey Life; Five News Update. 8.00 Ripped from the Cockpit: BA Flight of Terror; Five News at 9. 9.00 Film: The Bone Collector. (1999) Thriller, starring Denzel Washington and Angelina Jolie. 11.25 Forensic Files. (R) 11.55 Cops in Crisis. (R) 12.15 SuperCasino. 4.00 How Not to Decorate. (R) 4.45 HouseBusters. (R) 5.10 Wildlife SOS. (R) 5.35 House Doctor. (R)

Friday

BBC1 6.00 Breakfast. 9.15 Wanted Down Under. 10.00 Homes Under the Hammer; BBC News; Weather. 11.00 Saints and Scroungers. 11.45 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) BBC News; Weather. 12.15 Bargain Hunt. 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.30 Regional News; Weather. 1.45 Doctors. 2.15 Cash in the Celebrity Attic. 3.00 BBC News; Weather; Regional News. 3.05 CBBC. 5.15 Weakest Link. 6.00 BBC News; Weather. 6.30 Regional News Programmes; Weather. 7.00 The One Show. 7.30 A Question of Sport. (R) BBC News; Regional News. 8.00 EastEnders. 8.30 QI. 9.00 Hustle. 10.00 BBC News. 10.25 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 The Graham Norton Show. 11.20 The National Lottery: Friday Night Draws. 11.30 Film: Starship Troopers. (1997) Sci-fi adventure, starring Casper Van Dien; Weatherview. 1.30 Sign Zone: James May's Man Lab. (R) 2.30 Horizon: Miracle Cure? A Decade of the Human Genome. (R) 3.30 Filthy Rotten Scoundrels. (R) 4.15 BBC News.

BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 Animal Park. (R) 12.00 Daily Politics. 12.30 GMT with George Alagiah. 1.00 Ready Steady Cook. 1.25 Coast. (R) 1.30 Live Snooker: The Masters. Coverage of the third best-of-11-frames quarter-final. 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Great British Railway Journeys. 7.00 Live Snooker: The Masters. The fourth best-of-11-frames quarter-final. 8.00 Mastermind. 8.30 Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. 9.00 Can't Take It with You. 10.00 Fast and Loose. 10.30 Newsnight. 11.00 The Review Show; Weather. 11.50 Snooker: The Masters. 12.40 Snooker Extra. 2.40 BBC News. 4.15 Close.

ITV1 6.00 Daybreak. 8.30 Lorraine. 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. 10.30 This Morning. 12.30 Loose Women. 1.30 ITV News; Weather. 1.55 Regional News; Weather. 2.00 May the Best House Win. 3.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. 3.50 Regional Weather. 4.00 Doc Martin. (R) 5.00 The Chase. 6.00 Regional News; Weather. 6.30 ITV News; Weather. 7.00 Emmerdale. 7.30 Coronation Street. 8.00 Children's Hospital. 8.30 Coronation Street. 9.00 Comedy Rocks with Jason Manford. 10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather. 10.30 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 Take Me Out. (R) 11.50 30 Years of An Audience With. (R) 12.40 The Zone; ITV News Headlines. 2.40 Film: US Marshals. (1998) Thriller sequel, starring Tommy Lee Jones. 4.50 ITV Nightscreen. 5.30 ITV Morning News.

Channel 4 6.05 The Hoobs. (R) 6.30 The Hoobs. (R) 6.55 Freshly Squeezed. 7.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.50 Frasier. (R) 8.15 Frasier. (R) 8.40 According to Jim. (R) 9.10 Supernanny USA. (R) 10.10 Film: Blithe Spirit. (1945) Supernatural comedy, starring Rex Harrison. 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary. 12.05 Three in a Bed. (R) 12.35 Come Dine with Me. (R) 1.05 Come Dine with Me. (R) 1.35 Come Dine with Me. (R) 2.05 Come Dine with Me. (R) 2.40 Come Dine with Me. (R) 3.10 Countdown. 3.55 Deal or No Deal. 5.00 Celebrity Five Go To. 6.00 The Simpsons. (R) 6.30 Hollyoaks. 7.00 Channel 4 News. 7.25 4thought.tv. 7.30 The Pawn King. 7.55 Jamie's Fish Supper. 8.00 Relocation: Phil Down Under. 9.00 Heston's Feasts. 10.00 Shameless. 11.10 Film: Hot Shots! Part Deux. (1993) Spoof action movie sequel, starring Charlie Sheen. 12.50 Music on 4: 4Play: White Lies. 1.05 My Name Is Earl. (R) 1.55 Comedy Lab: iCandy. (R) 2.20 Film: Baby Boy. (2001) Premiere. Drama, starring Tyrese Gibson. 4.30 ER. (R) 5.15 Countdown. (R) 5.55 Close.

Channel 5 6.00 Milkshake! 9.15 The Wright Stuff. 11.00 The Vanessa Show. 11.45 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 12.40 Five News. 12.45 Emergency Bikers. (R) 1.45 Neighbours. 2.15 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 3.05 Film: The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. (1999) 5.00 Five News at 5; Weather. 5.30 Neighbours. (R) 6.00 Monkey Life. 6.25 Live from Studio Five. 7.00 Five News at 7. 7.30 Michaela's Zoo Babies. (R) Five News Update. 8.00 Pirates of the Caribbean: The True Story; Five News at 9. 9.00 The Mentalist. (R) 10.00 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R) 10.55 NCIS. 11.55 Cops in Crisis. (R) 12.15 SuperCasino. 4.00 Motorsport Mundial. 4.25 How Not to Decorate. 5.10 Wildlife SOS. 5.35 House Doctor.

Brain Gym

No.098

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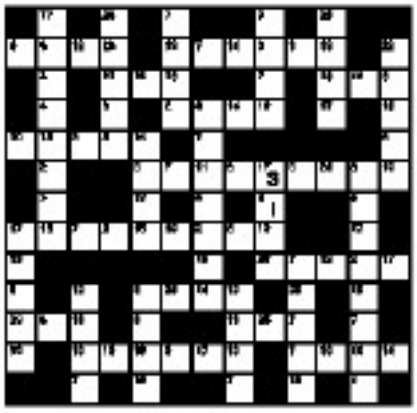
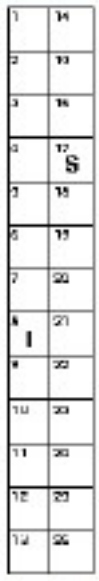
Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.





LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

N	Y	C	U	J	I	A	P	E	D	B	F	M
L	X	W	R	H	K	S	V	Q	Q	O	Z	T

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. Scene of contention long time back (5)
8. Hack on web, perhaps (7)
9. Definitely gentle colour? (7)
10. A fine chinese colour spread abroad (5)
12. They go on foot on cinder alley (8)
14. Loyalties flirt in relatively unpolished (9,4)
14. The devil's one of the open smile (5)
19. Hocus of floating? (7)
21. Ascendin for a little prayer (7)
22. She puts right knee often in her bent (5)

Down

1. Jumping change for circumstances (9,3)
2. Be interested in concerning recent activity (8)
3. Fine opportunity to entertainment (6)
4. Be entertainment virtuous question soon (9)
5. Introduction broken a cosy (4)
6. Good cuisine for long distances down (4)
11. Used untimely after original pearl (8)
13. Learning to change in a big way (8)
14. Gin liquor finally? (7)
15. One meets in their antiques (8)
17. Remote time (5)
20. Ring even in difficulty (4)

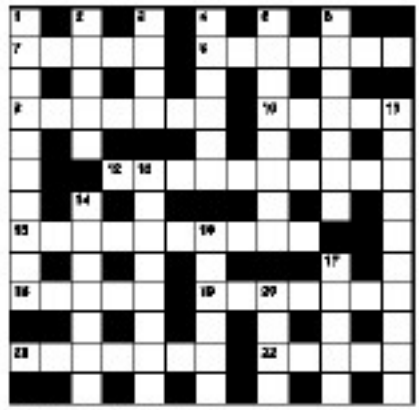
Quick Clues:

Across

7. Shiner (3)
8. Shadow check (7)
9. Unknown (7)
10. Suppose (5)
12. Effect (5,3)
14. Short hues (10)
14. Both hindquarter (5)
19. Springy (7)
21. Coveted (7)
22. Since (5)

Down

1. Unlike room! (10)
2. Stolen pain (3)
3. Use of this (6)
4. Hide (6)
6. Without harm (4)
8. Hot dog (7)
11. Charming (10)
13. Unknown (9)
14. Chastity (7)
16. Impolite (8)
18. Jumble (5)
20. Too (4)



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

CRYPTIC: Across: 1 Hindquarter, 6 Sync, 9 Ordinarily, 11 Wanted, 12 Unless, 13 Sensation, 16 Jesus, 17 Grill, 18 Mistake, 20 Ultimate, 22 Lap; 23 Quarter. Down: 2 Tie, 3 Trolls, 4 Hassle, 5 Lesson, 6 Ron Weasley, 7 Crescent, 8 Hartland Falls, 10 Bilingualism, 14 Orchard, 15 Hindu, 19 Waves, 21 Tax, 24 Ron. Across: 1 Hoodwink, 5 Ancient, 7 Hairdrier, 8 Ivy, 11 White, 12 Lately, 13 Rumour, 15 Smudge, 17 Jumbo, 18 Rising, 21 Anonymous, 22 Lap, 23 Latently. Down: 2 Top, 3 Sight, 4 Adam, 5 Oyster, 6 Chesterfield, 7 Chimney, 9 Ferrari disc, 10 Wrestle, 14 Mirror, 16 Aston, 19 Lily, 20 Ill.

Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

				6			8	5
5		1		3	7	2	6	
		6						4
			3	7				
9		2			1	6		7
	7			9	5			
8						9	4	
	3	9	1	8				
4	1			5				3

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

Circlegram

Replace the question marks with a letter so that the letters within each circle can be arranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter repeated twice by the question marks?

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

The letter repeated twice by the question marks is R. Anxiety, Jeopardy, control, all are of Protection.

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222 BRISTNALL HALL ROAD, OLDBURY B68 9NH
Double fronted semi-detached with 2 bedrooms, in need of general upgrading £85-90,000

26 KESTREL ROAD, OLDBURY B68 8AS
A gas centrally heated 3 bedroomed semi-detached £90-100,000

33 CASTLE ROAD WEST, OLDBURY B68 0EN
3 bedroomed semi-detached with gas central heating, in need of general upgrading £100-110,000

398 CITY ROAD, TIVIDALE B69 1QZ
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ADVERTORIAL

DEMAND FOR PART-EXCHANGE SOARS AS CANNY HOMEOWNERS BEAT THE MARKET

RECORD numbers of homeowners are looking to move up the housing ladder whilst getting around the problem of finding a buyer for their existing property, according to the Black Country's leading housebuilder.

Barratt West Midlands says levels of customer interest in its part-exchange service are at a new high. And the reason is clear – the difficulties facing homeowners who try to sell their own home in the current market.

"We've been offering a part-exchange service for more than 30 years but we've never had so many people looking to take advantage of it," said Graydon Worthing, Sales Director at Barratt West Midlands.

"People are coming to us who are understandably keen to move up the property ladder now. Because of the fall in house prices in the last four years, the gap between the price of your present home and the one you want to move up to is likely to be significantly smaller than it was in 2007."

"But we are hearing horror stories at the moment about the problems you could face if you try to sell your old property. Not only is it hard even to find a buyer in the second-hand market. Sometimes when you do find one they drop out or insist that you reduce the price."

With its part-exchange exchange service, Barratt West Midlands will buy your old place in just seven days when you purchase one of their new homes. That way you can buy and sell in one easy move and know you're getting fair market value for your old home.

There are no estate agents' fees to pay, you side-step most of the hassle and cost usually associated with selling a property and – best of all – you'll have no worries about the dreaded housebuying 'chain' breaking.

"It's just like part exchanging a car," Graydon added. "We'll consider buying your current home so that you are free to buy one of ours.

"We arrange for the property to be valued by two independent surveyors and make a fair offer based on the highest of the two valuations. We are a guaranteed cash buyer, there's no chain, no agents' fees or last minute price haggling."

"This probably sounds like a very good deal to anyone currently struggling to sell their old home. I would urge anyone interested to call us today to find out more."

Barratt West Midlands is currently offering part exchange for a limited period only on selected homes at the following developments in the Black Country:

The Bridles
Bell Lane
Bloxwich
WS3 2JW
Tel: 01922 497 516

The Bridles offers a selection of one-bedroom apartments priced from £99,950 and two-, three- and four-bedroom houses priced from £144,950.

Canal Walk
Purlin Wharf
Off Halesowen Road
Dudley
DY2 9PQ
Tel: 01384 561 329

Canal Walk has just two, two-bedroom apartments remaining priced from £111,995.

Dukes Park
Constantine Way
Bilston
WV14 8GX
Tel: 01902 491 221

Dukes Park has a selection of two-, three-, four- and five-bedroom houses priced from £138,250.

Fordbrook Court
Station Road
Rushall
WS4 1ES
Tel: 01922 721 873

Fordbrook Court offers a selection of two- and three-bedroom houses priced from £139,950.

Fox Walk
Foxoak Street
Cradley Heath
B64 5DF
Tel: 01384 411538

Fox Walk offers a single two- bedroom apartment priced at £119,950 and a selection of three- bedroom houses priced from £154,950.

Fusion
Sun Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 1AA
Tel: 01902 451 396

Fusion offers a selection of one- and two-bedroom apartments priced from £91,950.

Hodkins Place
Leabrook Road
Wednesbury
WS10 7LX
Tel: 0121 505 1857

Hodkins Place comprises two-bedroom apartments and three- and four-bedroom houses priced from £91,950.

Merryfields
Moor Street
Brierley Hill
DY5 3QF
Tel: 01384 789 22

Merryfields offers one- and two-bedroom apartments priced from £96,950 and three-bedroom houses with prices from £171,950.

Monarch's Gate
King Street
Wednesbury
WS10 7PQ
Tel: 0121 505 1375

Monarch's Gate offers one- and two-bedroom apartments and three-bedroom houses priced from £79,950.

Waters Edge
Mart Lane
Stourport-on-Severn
DY13 9ER
Tel: 01299 828 13

Waters Edge offers two- bedroom apartments and three- bedroom houses, priced from £146,950.

For more information, please contact the sales office open daily from 10am to 5pm. Alternatively, please call the sales hotline on 0844 811 9933 open seven days a week from 8am to 9pm or log on to www.barratthomes.co.uk

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3 and 4 bedroom houses from £155,950

Dukes Park,
Constantine Way, Bilston WV14 8GX
01902 491 221
2, 3, 4 and 5 bedroom houses
from £138,250

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team

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- Off Road Parking
- No Upward Chain

Offers in the region of £104,000

Bernard Road, Edgbaston

Offers in the region of £[illegible]

Maynard Road, Edgbaston

- A Modern Ground Floor Apartment
- Two Bedrooms
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Offers in the region of £[illegible]

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- Spacious Bathroom

Offers in the region of £[illegible]

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- Traditional Terrace
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- Close to Local Amenities
- Ideal FTB

Offers in the region of £[illegible]

Queens Road, Smethwick

Offers in the region of £[illegible]

JANUARY SALE

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Offers in the region of £[illegible]

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French firm says its electronic alternative to a 4x4 is ideal for any further cold snaps

Getting to grips with winter

BRITAIN'S big freeze has seen continued interest in 4x4s.

But there can be big sacrifices to make on emissions, and therefore tax, fuel consumption and insurance costs for some models.

Now Peugeot is highlighting its 4x4 alternative, designed to give drivers enhanced driving ability in poor conditions, while remaining affordable and comfortable in everyday use.

The option is the firm's 3008 "crossover" fitted with Peugeot's innovative Grip Control.

Grip Control consists of an intelligent traction control system and special Mud and Snow tyres. It automatically improves traction on difficult surfaces such as snow, mud, dirt tracks and wet grass.

The 3008's snow mode boosts traction

The car has a well-equipped cabin

Grip Control offers all-weather ability without the weight and emissions of a 4x4

Modes

The system works with the vehicle's ESP (Electronic Stability Programme) to maintain the best possible traction from both front wheels. It has five selectable operating modes which can be chosen by the driver from a dedicated control mounted on the centre console.

In Standard mode, the vehicle's ESP system is calibrated for typical grip levels found on normal road surfaces, where there are low levels of wheel slip.

Snow mode adapts the system to gain the best traction from each of the front wheels when the car is pulling away. As the car increases speed, the system constantly tweaks the traction control to maintain acceleration in the face of variable grip conditions.

The system returns to Standard once you are over 31mph.

All-terrain mode copes with mud, dirt tracks and wet grass by allowing a high level of slip on the least stable wheel when pulling away to remove excess mud and improve grip. At the same time, the wheel with the strongest grip level is given as much torque as possible. As the system is electronically controlled the torque offset between the front wheels can be as much as 100 per cent, well beyond normal limits for a limited slip differential. As the car gains speed, the system continually works against wheel slip to give the driver the best possible control over the vehicle up to 50mph.

Sand mode allows slight wheel slip on both drive wheels simultaneously, to allow the vehicle to make headway and reduce the risk of getting stuck in the sand. Here again, the control provided is superior to that of a limited slip differential (LSD). In this mode, Standard mode kicks in automatically above a speed of 75mph.

There is also an ESP Off setting, which disconnects ESP and Grip Control up to 31mph, giving control to the driver. Above this speed, "ESP Standard" selects automatically.

Peugeot's Grip Control option also includes the standard fitment of 215/60 R16 Michelin Latitude Tour HP "Mud and Snow" tyres, which are suitable for off-road use. These tyres have special StabiliGrip blades within the tread pattern that can lock together to maintain good tread contact with the driven terrain.

Seasons

Grip Control gives the Peugeot 3008 Crossover a great all-round ability as well as providing excellent towing and carrying capabilities for better weather, making it a genuine car for all seasons.

And, when the weather changes the system has none of the disadvantages with regards to increased weight and emissions of a standard mechanical 4x4 system.

Peugeot's Grip Control is available as standard on the Peugeot 3008 SR Crossover and as a £470 option on the Peugeot 3008 Sport and Exclusive HDi 112 & HDi 150 Crossover models.

Prices for the Peugeot 3008 range start at £16,695 on the road.

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Hyundai is set to go upmarket

The Hyundai i40 has been developed for the European market and will arrive in estate form

HYUNDAI has announced a family-sized car designed to boost the UK market's perception of the brand.

The new vehicle will be called the i40 and it will be launched in estate form in 2011, followed by a saloon version.

The Mondeo-sized model will make its debut at the 2011 Geneva Motor Show in March.

The i40, which was known by the codename 'VF' during development, arrives as the Korean company embarks on the next phase of its brand and product evolution in Europe. The new i40 aims to further shift European consumer perception of Hyundai to a more aspirational position, thanks to dynamic design and class-leading quality, performance and technical features.

Allan Rushforth, vice president of Hyundai Motor Europe, said: "We have bold ambitions for Hyundai in Europe, and the new i40 will provide the momentum we need to achieve our goals in 2011 and beyond. We expect the quality of the new i40 to continue the development of our image in Europe and attract new customers."

Designed at Hyundai's European R&D facilities in Germany, the new i40 has been specifically developed for the European market. The car will progress the 'fluidic sculpture' design, featuring the company's signature hexagonal front grille and rakish lines which give the i40 a dynamic, sporty appearance by connecting the front, side and rear profiles. It will also become Hyundai's most innovative model in Europe, including latest environmental technologies, and a powertrain line-up which boasts best-in-class performance and fuel economy, and very low CO2 emissions.

Mr Rushforth added: "The i40 perfectly combines the four elements that have become core Hyundai values: practicality, performance, efficiency, and styling."

The i40 will benefit from the Five Year Triple Care package that includes a five-year unlimited mileage warranty, five years' roadside assistance and five years of vehicle health checks.

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BMW draws on motor racing expertise to produce its stunning new performance coupe

Hottest BMW 1 Series unveiled

The 1 Series M Coupe powers to 62mph in 4.9 seconds

A Boston leather cabin, with sport seats, is standard

An excellent power to weight ratio will enable BMW's 1 Series M Coupe to outperform the previous M3

EVERY new BMW M car forms part of a very special family tree that can trace a lineage of iconic performance road cars back to the legendary BMW M1 from the 1970s.

The latest car to feature the letter M comes with stunning performance from a race-bred powertrain, a controllable, agile and exploitable chassis, the finest materials and components, and an attractive, sporty design to ensure it takes a deserved place among these icons.

The new BMW 1 Series M Coupé heralds the introduction of a high performance sports car into a compact design that extends the BMW M portfolio and paves the way for a wider audience to appreciate M car ownership.

An M car has to have sublime driving characteristics first and foremost, but it must look stunning too, and the BMW 1 Series M Coupé does not deviate from this formula.

Dramatic

The sporty character of the BMW 1 Series M Coupé is expressed by a dramatic exterior design, with widened wheel arches, exclusive 19-inch Y-spoke M alloy wheels, and dual chrome tailpipes.

A discreet spoiler lip generating additional downforce and a rear apron with side openings echoing the look of the front air intakes ensure the look of sporting intent matches the model's sporting ability. L-shaped rear light clusters with two light banks fed by LED units complete the M car look. Exterior paint finishes are Alpine White non-metallic, Black Sapphire metallic and the exclusive Valencia Orange metalic.

The BMW 1 Series M Coupé is fitted as standard with bi-xenon headlamps, and LED-fed positioning lights. A hallmark M-branded feature is the elongated chrome gill element on the front wheel arch, while the door mirrors are from the BMW M3, but tuned for the specific aerodynamic characteristics.

The standard sports seats in Boston leather feature Kyalami orange stitching and offer both driver and front passenger excellent lateral hold. The interior is exclusively modelled for the BMW 1 Series M Coupé, with an M leather steering wheel and the use of Alcantara with Kyalami orange contrast stitching on the door trim, door inserts, handbrake and gear lever gaiter and instrument binnacle cove. The M logo is also embossed in the front of the headrests.

The new BMW 1 Series M Coupé has at its heart a high revving, in-line six-cylinder engine with twin turbocharger, direct injection technology and double VANOS variable valve timing to develop a maximum output of 340hp. Such performance equates to a highly desirable car that takes just 4.9 seconds to accelerate from zero to 62mph. The BMW M tuned twin-turbocharger technology used consists of two relatively small turbos which, because of their low inertia characteristics, are active even at low engine speeds, ensuring no turbo lag, yet a peak power output which is achieved at 5,900rpm.

The great flexibility of the 2,979cc engine means that maximum torque of 450Nm is produced from as little as 1,500rpm. A flat torque curve for swift in gear acceleration sees peak torque maintained up to 4,500 rpm. This figure can be increased by another 50Nm when the car is under full throttle by means of an overboost function. In fact, such is its stunning performance and handling, it is expected to be significantly faster around the Nürburgring Nordschleife than the previous generation E46 BMW M3.

The chassis of the BMW 1 Series M Coupé has been tested using BMW M GmbH's racing-oriented development process, and uses numerous key components, originally conceived for the BMW M3, have been modified for use in this car.

Light weight is of course vital and the latest M car tips the scales at 1,495kgs courtesy of the extensive use of aluminium. The double pivot front axle and the five-link rear axle are made almost entirely of aluminium. With chassis technology derived directly from motor racing, a power-to-weight ratio of 227hp/tonne has been achieved.

Footprint

The footprint of the car is bigger than a standard BMW 1 Series Coupé with it being 55mm wider than the BMW 135i Coupé. The width of 1,803 mm is the result of optimisation of the front and rear axle to enhance driving dynamics.

As standard, BMW 1 Series M Coupé comes with Variable M differential lock, compound brakes, DSC with MDM and M Servotronic. The Variable M differential lock responds to differences in rotational speeds in the rear wheels, redirecting torque within a fraction of a second for optimum traction and maximum thrust on slippery surfaces and when accelerating out of bends.

The BMW 1 Series M Coupé comes with an extensive range of standard equipment, including 19-inch Y-Spoke alloy wheels, two-zone air-conditioning, cruise control, BMW Radio Business with MP3-capable CD player and six speakers. It also has a Boston leather interior with Alcantara trim with Kyalami orange stitching in the cabin. Optional extras include Comfort Access, Harman Kardon Surround Sound System, Professional Navigation system with hard drive storage, Adaptive Headlights and High beam assistant.

The BMW 1 Series M Coupé goes on sale in May 2011 priced at £39,990 on the road, with the first customer deliveries in May.

Kia scoop design awards

KIA Motors has scooped product design awards for its two latest vehicles – the Sportage crossover and Optima saloon – in the recently announced 2011 iF product design awards.

In addition to design quality, the jury also recognized other criteria, including workmanship, level of innovativeness, eco-friendliness, ergonomics and safety. One of the main focuses in this year's awards was on the participants' brand image.

"These latest awards for the all-new Kia Sportage and Optima are positive proof of the tremendous strides Kia has made in revolutionizing the styling of our product line-up," said Tae-Hyun Oh, Senior Vice-President & Chief Operating Officer, Kia Motors Corporation. "Our global management team's focus on design since the mid-2000s is now clearly paying dividends, and, in conjunction with the rapidly improving quality of our vehicles, Kia's enhanced brand reputation is being driven by the stunning designs being created by our design teams around the world, led by Chief Design Officer Peter Schreyer."

Since its launch in 1953, the annual iF product design award has been one of the world's most important prizes for excellence in design. For the iF product design award 2011, the organizers received 2,756 submissions from 43 countries for products registered in 16 categories. Kia Sportage and Kia Optima won in the category "Transportation Design."

Fair

The official presentation ceremony for the iF product design awards will take place on 1 March 2011, the first day of CeBIT – the world's largest trade fair showcasing digital IT and telecommunications solutions for home and work environments. A special exhibition, showcasing all the award-winning products, will also open at the Hanover Exhibition Centre on the same day and will run until August 2011.

Saab now bringing in changes for UK roads

SAAB GB has announced a number of specification upgrades for the new 9-5 Vector SE models with immediate effect.

All model year 2011 Saab 9-5 Vector SE models will now be fitted with leather-trimmed seats as standard, replacing the previous leather and textile interior trim.

In addition, the 17-inch Blade alloy wheels are replaced with 18-inch Carve alloy wheels, improving the car's aesthetic appeal. Prices are unchanged.

Saab GB has also made an important change to the chassis configuration for all 2.0-litre TiD 160PS models which are equipped with manual transmission.

The previous sport chassis fitted as standard has now been replaced with a revised comfort chassis specification.

This chassis change in combination with the change to 18-inch alloy wheels improves the overall dynamic behaviour of the vehicle.

Jonathan Nash, Saab GB managing director, said: "The improved driving characteristics address issues related to ride comfort on UK roads.

"The fact that the engineering team have managed to make the changes without affecting the impressive CO2 emissions of just 139g/km for the manual 2.0-litre TiD 160PS car show that the small independent Saab engineering team can respond very quickly to market requirements."

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Albion end 2010 with a worrying flashback

ALBION said farewell to 2010 by giving The Hawthorns a worrying reminder of the team of 2008.

Roberto Di Matteo's outfit, having done so much this season to rid the club of its "fluent but fallible" tag, came over all Mowbray-esque to carelessly toss away three points and ensure a miserable holiday return.

The quality of Albion's approach work against both Bolton and Blackburn should have left Di Matteo's men turning the year nudging the top six. Instead, they still have much work to do to preserve their top-flight status. The Baggies should have done better than this.

Even at 3-1 down just after the hour, they would be given 24 minutes to go at a visiting team reduced to 10 men by the red card shown two-goal Nikola Kalinic for a studs-up and late challenge on Paul Scharner.

The advantage was eventually levelled out by the dismissal of Gabriel Tamas after he deliberately upended Mame Biram Diouf to prevent the forward breaking clear.

But that was with just six minutes playing time remaining and the real damage of that incident will spill over into the three games the defender will now miss because of suspension.

But more worrying were the weaknesses which presented Rovers with a flattering victory and which will have been all too familiar to supporters who watched Albion's previous Premier League challenge.

For the first half of this campaign, and throughout the Championship promotion which preceded it, Albion had eradicated their vulnerability at set-pieces. But the old Achilles heel was exposed once more as the two second-half goals from which Blackburn won the game sprang directly from poorly-defended corners.

Meanwhile, at the other end, the Baggies fans watched a regular supply of opportunities want for a clinical finishing touch even allowing for the visitors being well served by not one but two notable goalkeeping performances.

An injured Paul Robinson made one fine stop to deny Graham Dorrans before half-time.

Albion 1
Blackburn 3

His replacement Mark Bunn proved equally defiant through the second period.

Despite a smattering of the form which has raised the bar of expectation surrounding Di Matteo's team, this was a performance dogged by the same air of calamity which undermined Mowbray's Premier League campaign and which the current boss will be desperate to remove as quickly as it has arrived.

Scott Carson got away with an absolute howler midway through the second half, presenting the ball to Kalinic who, fortunately, was too startled to take advantage.

And the goals Albion did concede were directly sourced to some woefully naive defending.

This felt like a match Blackburn had to do very little to win while Albion were working so hard to lose it, a conclusion which will sound alarm bells amid the faithful who were beginning to believe the bad old days had been banished by the current management team.

Di Matteo has a sharp eye to match his style and his focus between now and the weekend will be on his defence which, taking its cue from a generally sluggish start all round, was caught napping in the third minute.

From the centre circle, Morten Gamst Pedersen whipped a diagonal ball behind Gonzalo Jara, who had allowed Kalinic to drift from his attention.

Evidence

That lapse was compounded by the hesitancy the through-ball induced from Scott Carson, the keeper eventually opting to stand his ground when he might have been better served by sprinting to intercept the pass. Kalinic's precise execution made the Baggies pay.

Nevertheless, mid-way through the first half, the home side looked nicely back on course and with more than enough to eventually pick off opponents still wearing their "under new management" label following Sam Allardyce's abrupt departure.

James Morrison seemed determined at this point to take the game by the scruff of its neck, firing one screaming 25-yard drive, which only faded a fraction off target at the last, when he first burst into clear space before releasing Somen Tchoyi with a determined, forceful run in the 17th minute.

This would be an ultimately frustrating performance from Tchoyi but the cross he fizzed across goal was an absolute peach that Jerome Thomas could not fail to convert at the far post.

Maybe the game's turning point came three minutes into a second half the home fans, based on earlier evidence, must have expected their team to dominate.

Dorrans, who is happily now looking much more like his old self, played Peter Odemwingie clear for a fiercely-driven left-foot drive which threatened the narrow gap at Bunn's near post. The substitute keeper managed a terrific block, and Rovers were two goals to the good before Albion could create chances of similar quality.

Rovers' famed efficiency at set-pieces, orchestrated by Pedersen's menacing deliveries, were at the heart of both.

A 53rd-minute corner to the back post was headed back across goal by Ryan Nelson for Kalinic to head his second before Albion – focused solely on preparing themselves for another Pedersen corner – were caught out by a short pass to El Hadji Diouf instead.

The change of angle in delivery left Carson's cover flat-footed for Mame Biram Diouf to head Rovers' third and put the game beyond Albion's reach.

Although the game collapsed towards untidiness amid the red cards and Rovers' inevitable delaying tactics, Albion produced sufficient skirmishes to keep them interested.

But when Scharner headed an 81st-minute Dorrans free-kick against the bar and Tchoyi failed with the rebound from close range, a sense of the inevitable swamped The Hawthorns.

Referee Phil Dowd shows Gabriel Tamas a red card for his cynical late foul

Trotters' win leaves boss with a puzzle

ROBERTO Di Matteo left Bolton pondering a puzzle.

But solving the mystery of how Albion left the Reebok Stadium on the wrong end of a 2-0 scoreline might be tougher than a Rubik's Cube.

BOLTON 2
ALBION 0

The Baggies dominated possession, were dangerous throughout and created a series of chances against their high-flying hosts. And yet Di Matteo and Co left without a goal or a point thanks to strikes in each half from Matt Taylor and Johan Elmander.

It's little wonder the Hawthorns head coach boarded the bus back to the Midlands admitting he was "scratching his head" at the manner of his team's defeat.

If the Italian left Villa Park a little confused about how his side were beaten, he must have been thoroughly perplexed this time.

The returning Peter Odemwingie alone had enough opportunities to put the Baggies out of sight. Factor in a header against the woodwork from Chris Brunt, a missed chance for James Morrison and several other close shaves, and the result was an afternoon of pure frustration.

Twice Di Matteo's men were hit on the break by the Trotters, who ensured their visitors were punished to the full for their festive profligacy.

Whether it was their own wastefulness, a hefty chunk of misfortune or a combination of both, Di Matteo will not welcome too many more afternoon's like this in his team's quest for survival.

There was no time for Albion to ease themselves into the game before Paul Scharner had to make a crucial interception to snuff out a promising attack from the home side.

An errant pass from Gonzalo Jara found the feet of Kevin Davies, who looked set to complete a one-two on the edge of the box with Elmander and charge in on goal, only for Scharner's sliding intervention to block the return pass.

But there was an early moment of promise for the Baggies, too, when Gabriel Tamas's raking ball was headed on by Brunt into Morrison, whose attempt to trick his way into the box with a lob was just about thwarted by Zat Knight.

And the visitors began to take control as the half progressed and had several opportunities to test Jussi Jaaskelainen in the Trotters goal.

Baggies old-boy Paul Robinson had to be alert at the far post to head a cross away from Brunt after Somen Tchoyi had powered away from Gary Cahill to centre.

Tchoyi then cut inside Gretar Steinsson and blasted a couple of feet wide after a fine burst through by Graham Dorrans.

And Odemwingie should have called Jaaskelainen into action when he sprang the offside trap to collect Morrison's sublime chip on the edge of the six-yard box, only to lose his bearings and fire wide.

Marek Cech should also have done better when he galloped forwards to collect a pass from Tchoyi before skying a cross harmlessly away as Dorrans steamed into the goalmouth.

But, amid the Baggies' dominance, there was a dangerous Bolton break with Fabrice Muamba powering through the centre and, when Elmander stayed onside to collect the midfielder's pass, the Baggies were grateful to see the striker scoop his shot over from a decent position 12 yards out.

The visitors should have led when Odemwingie raced clear on the right and had Dorrans unmarked in the centre of the box but delivered a poor cross that was cut out by Cahill.

Yet it was the hosts who were ahead at the break courtesy of a moment of composure from Chung-Yong Lee. The Korean was released in the box by Elmander and, despite being shepherded wide by Jara, he picked out Taylor, who raced in to finish.

Even then there was time for Jara's long-range drive to be pushed over by Jaaskelainen just before half-time and the Baggies continued to press after the break.

Pressure

Brunt headed against the post with Jaaskelainen beaten from a Tchoyi cross and Morrison should have levelled when he was released by an Odemwingie through-ball but his touch was heavy and the keeper raced out to gather at his feet.

The pressure on the home side did not let up with Odemwingie squandering the best of his chances with 22 minutes remaining, springing the offside trap to collect Brunt's disguised pass, only to send a shot wide with just Jaaskelainen to beat.

Next to be denied was substitute Ishmael Miller, although he could have done little more to add the finishing touch to a neat run by Dorrans and a good cross from Brunt. Miller's shot was on target but Cahill was on hand to make the block.

The travelling fans must have suspected it was not to be their day, and their suspicions were confirmed when Elmander put the game to bed with four minutes left, jinking past Tamas and Cech and, after seeing his initial shot blocked, blasting the rebound low past Scott Carson.

New year means a brand new start for Houllier's Villa

A NEW year, a new start and new sense of optimism for Villa fans after an enthralling match to kick off 2011.

Gerard Houllier would have been glad to have seen the back of 2010. Poor results, rumours of dressing room unrest and disillusionment from sections of the fanbase served to put pressure on the Villa boss at the end of the year. Before the game Houllier had called for "unity" andwhat is abundantly clear is that the slate is now clean.

This was a performance which blew away the cobwebs and even though it was one point, rather than the deserved three, it will hopefully go some way towards ensuring the season is not the write-off that some were predicting.

Slowly but surely it seems there is a general acceptance that the Villa boss is here for the long haul. Owner Randy Lerner and chief executive Paul Faulkner are completely committed to Houllier's philosophy on the direction of the club.

And even those predisposed to criticism know the time to cast a full and proper judgement on Houllier's regime at Villa Park will be at this stage in 12 months time, when he has had the time to stamp his authority on the club.

Under his predecessor Villa's players were given too much freedom, which is perhaps why they were never able to make that extra step and crack the top four.

And it is just that type of discipline off the pitch and work behind the scenes on the training ground which Houllier is seeking to instill in his players.

Did anyone really expect it to be easy, let alone an overnight process?

But the shift in attitude against Chelsea from the games against Tottenham (lost 1-2) – and particularly Manchester City (lost 4-0) – was there for all to see.

Houllier also said he wanted players "to go to war" and, for the first time in a while, the claret and blues' players put on the Villa shirt and marched into battle.

It was typified by the approach and application of one of Houllier's apparently disillusioned lieutenants – Richard Dunne.

The Irish centre-back was one of the players said to have clashed with Villa's backroom staff in December but against Chelsea he produced a gritty performance.

It was a display full of character, guts and determination. Definitely a man you want in the trenches with you.

CHELSEA 3
VILLA 3

Additionally, Houllier was given short shrift when he bemoaned injury problems but, with the likes of Ashley Young, Gabby Agbonlahor and Stiliyan Petrov back in regular action, Villa looked much more steeled for the encounter.

After outplaying the hosts for large parts of the first half they deservedly led in the second and at 2-1 could have gone on to win quite easily with a bit more ambition.

Despite a bright start, Villa pressed the self-destruct button as they did at Eastlands and gave away a needless penalty. James Collins jostled with Florent Malouda for a high ball but the Wales defender was unable to get a decisive touch and collapsed on top of the Chelsea winger.

It was a soft penalty to concede and, although Brad Friedel guessed correctly and dived to his right, he was unable to stop Frank Lampard's powerful spot-kick.

Dunne continued to lead by example with a last-ditch tackle on Malouda. The Irish defender then had a great chance to pull Villa level at the other end when the ball was put back into the box by Stewart Downing but Dunne could only shin the ball over the bar.

Rewarded

However, the visitors' endeavour was rewarded just before the half-time break as the ball ricocheted around the Chelsea box. Chelsea defender Paulo Ferreira failed to clear his lines and Nigel Reo-Coker latched on to the ball before he was upended by Michael Essien. Ashley Young held his nerve as he fired past Petr Cech.

It was all Villa straight after half-time and they took a deserved lead immediately after the break with a brilliant move which unlocked the Chelsea defence. Young played a brilliant crossfield ball to Downing on the right flank and winger delivered a pinpoint ball to the back post in the direction of Emile Heskey. The powerful striker used his strength to outmuscle John Terry and Jeffrey Bruma and headed past Cech.

Friedel made two stunning saves from Malouda and Lampard as Villa sat back but the rearguard action was eventually breached in a thrilling final 10 minutes.

Chelsea scrambled home an equaliser in the 85th minute when Didier Drogba's near-post shot beat Friedel and deflected off Carlos Cuellar and into the net. And it looked like John Terry had broken Villa hearts in the 89th minute when he slammed home after the ball pinged around the box.

But Villa's never-say-attitude saw them snatch a draw in injury time as Marc Albrighton crossed and the unmarked Ciaran Clark stole in to head home.

Steve Bruce's Sunderland were due at Villa Park last night (Wednesday) in a Premiership clash.

TALKING POINT

NEW YEAR, NEW VILLA?

Is this a fresh start for Villa and can they finally put their problems behind them? That's the question Villa fans were pondering after this splendid display at Stamford Bridge.

The last 12 months have been a rollercoaster ride for Villa fans and certainly – since Martin O'Neill's shock exit – they have been searching for stability. The character of this display against the champions hinted at the old Villa, the never-say-die spirit which embodied the O'Neill era. Houllier may have his fires to fight behind the scenes at Villa Park, but this could be a true turning point for the former France national coach and owner Randy Lerner. With important players returning to fitness, and a couple of decent additions in the transfer window this month, Villa fans can finally be looking ahead with relish in 2011.

Next two games...

SHEFFIELD UTD (A) Saturday

This FA Cup tie is a real banana skin for Gerard Houllier, especially with the Blades now under new management. The French boss has a chance to rest a few but can he afford to?

BLUES (A) January 16

A chance for redemption after Villa's Carling Cup heartache last month. A really key derby for both clubs.

sport

Graham Dorrans shares a joke with Wayne Rooney during Albion's clash with Manchester United at The Hawthorns

Fine-tuning is the key for Albion

ALBION can look forward to something new next month.

Because, for the first time in their Premier League history, the powers-that-be at The Hawthorns are preparing for a transfer window free from panic.

Ask a football manager to assess the strength of his squad and he will invariably claim to be a few players short.

Roberto Di Matteo is no different and the Baggies head coach would love to fine-tune his squad in several areas during the transfer window.

But, thanks to the club's best-ever first half to a top-flight campaign, sporting director Dan Ashworth just might be able to go through January without the Italian banging on his door in desperation. And that represents more new ground about to be broken for a club that saw in the new year as optimistically as it has for a generation.

While Di Matteo would clearly welcome three or four hand-picked new faces to cement a hugely encouraging first half to the season, the boss acknowledges that one new recruit is a more realistic scenario.

Pressure

But that will not stop Ashworth and his team using the window to strive for long-term improvement to a squad that has evolved impressively since the former Hawthorns academy director got his feet under the table.

It will be a new experience for all at the club, for whom January has traditionally been about fire-fighting and crisis management.

Roberto Di Matteo

Gary Megson, Bryan Robson and Tony Mowbray have all gone into January windows with the Baggies in sadly familiar territory, behind the eight-ball and in need of 'impact signings' to turn around seasons that were heading quickly to hell in a handcart. They pulled off a miracle once, when the likes of the effervescent Kieran Richardson and the influential Kevin Campbell provided the missing ingredients that turned a seemingly doomed season into the 'Great Escape' that will live forever in the annals of Hawthorns history.

On other occasions, however, the cracks have been too great to paper over and a month of hasty squad re-shaping has proved too little, too late.

Now, Ashworth and Co can look ahead to a month of opportunities without the intense pressure to save a faltering season. There is little doubt, however, that one key issue will retain an air of urgency.

Peter Odemwingie has been a revelation since swapping the uncomfortable atmosphere of Lokomotiv Moscow for a new challenge with Di Matteo. But the Nigeria international desperately needs a deputy.

With him the Baggies look a potent, pacy, attacking outfit. Without him they are a different side, still inventive and honest but lacking the spark and cutting edge to turn possession into regular goals.

And, with the 29-year-old dogged already by knee, calf and groin problems since his arrival in August, Di Matteo cannot bank on him being ever-present for the second half of the campaign.

Marc-Antoine Fortune has tried to fill the void in Odemwingie's absence but the former Nancy forward had been unable to reproduce the displays that made him a hit in his loan spell at The Hawthorns two seasons ago.

Hard-working but limited, the Frenchman lacks the pace and explosiveness of Odemwingie. And he clearly lacks the total confidence of his gaffer, too. That leaves the Italian with a void to fill.

Georgios Samaras will not be the man to plug it, despite intense speculation linking the Celtic man with a return to the Premier League, while Cameroon star Pierre Webo, of Real Mallorca, has been watched but is not near the top of the Baggies' wanted list.

Di Matteo wants a forward with experience of the English top-flight, making a domestic loan the most likely route to be explored over the next few weeks.

That will prove tricky, given the tight nature of a league in which around two-thirds of clubs might still see the Baggies as direct competitors, but the bigger clubs might still have youngsters or fringe players they are willing to lose for the rest of the season.

In midfield Di Matteo has an embarrassment of riches and is unlikely to change things for the time being.

But, at the back, he would ideally like at least two new faces, be it this month or in the summer. He is lacking a specialist deputy for first-choice right-back Gonzalo Jara while, with Abdoulaye Meite out of favour and Paul Scharner a reluctant centre-back, he is probably one option short at the heart of his defence. The likely return of Jonas Olsson will strengthen that department but, should the Swede be out for a significant period of time, the need for re-inforcements in that area will become a higher priority.

Di Matteo knows, however, that Jeremy Peace is loathed to spend in a mid-season window where he sees little value for money. The chairman will not rush into signings. And, for the first time in his reign, he will find few dissenters.

Stand-in defender Paul Scharner comes close to netting in front of the Brummie Road End but his header flashes just wide. Pictures: Ed Bagnall

Baggies must keep faith in Di Matteo way

THREE defeats, seven goals conceded, just two scored and a grim slide towards the relegation zone. All this from games against Bolton, Blackburn Rovers and Manchester United which the Baggies could have referred to the European Court for Human Rights for the results to be overturned.

But Roberto Di Matteo and his players have to believe their gifts from a disappointing festive season will arrive sooner or later.

While there is nothing more dangerous or self-deluding than a team welded to hard-luck stories, there is still too much to admire about Albion to believe the game will not reward them further down the line.

The Baggies are in the thick of multiple personnel problems and have lost the habit of winning games. In their latest exercise in misadventure, the freakish run of crocked or suspended defenders continued with Pablo Ibanez and Steven Reid becoming casualties of the battle with United.

Outplayed

And yet still they outplayed the unbeaten league leaders with a further demonstration of the stylish, progressive football The Hawthorns has enjoyed all season – before reminding everyone they remain masters of discovering new ways to lose a game.

It is to be hoped that, despite the downturn in results, no-one loses faith in Albion's modus operandi as things start to get twitchy.

The Baggies remain an impressive template for the huge majority of English clubs who must forge an existence based ultimately on punters through the gate

ALBION 1
MAN UNITED 2

and not the generosity of a benefactor.

Or referees it seems. You could trace the source of Albion's subsequent difficulties this season to the unfortunate Ibanez dismissal at Blackpool all those weeks ago.

You might, therefore, argue that they had more than enough reason to be miffed when Gary Neville escaped conceding a penalty and an inevitable red card when he chopped down Graham Dorrans as the Scotland international was about to score in the first half.

"If that had been us, you'd have sent him off," has become a favoured battlecry from their Black Country neighbours over perceived injustices, and Albion fans could be forgiven for thinking the same.

Maybe, referee Chris Foy's aberration was influenced by all those years of bullying and intimidation of officials directed from the manager's office at Old Trafford; send a United player off at the peril of what may be directed at you in the media by a manager who is allowed to operate under a different code of conduct to his rivals.

If Sir Alex Ferguson's brooding presence and ability to make trouble for officials was a factor, Foy should not have worried because this was one decision even Fergie admitted United were fortunate to survive.

"Gary was lucky to stay on," he said. "It was a penalty. At first I thought he had got a touch but, when I saw it again, he was lucky."

Unfortunately, sympathy for Albion was later strained when Jerome Thomas induced a trip from Rio Ferdinand to secure a spot-kick which Peter Odemwingie dragged wide even as Albion fans were wondering whether either Chris Brunt or Graham Dorrans would not have been more sure-footed takers.

United, having been pegged back by a waspish James Morrison strike which cancelled out a fairly tamely-conceded opener by Wayne Rooney, do not look gift horses in the mouth.

Taking their momentum from that let-off, they duly won the game with a rare flurry of pressure which induced sufficient confusion in Albion's defence for substitute Javier Hernandez to head home unmarked from six yards.

This goal provoked some furious arguments among Di Matteo's players. A raging Brunt appeared to blame Soman Tchoyi; Paul Scharner and Scott Carson were locked in a heated exchange. Good.

Healthy

Albion need this kind of healthy venom to drag themselves out of this slump and ensure they do not lapse into self pity.

But, most of all, they – players and supporters – need to keep the faith. That's become something of an over-used football cliche but, in Albion's case, it resonates perfectly.

They must believe theirs is still the right way to go, that they will get vital players back from injury and suspension, that Di Matteo will find the extra striker he requires this month and that, in Morrison and Dorrans, the team has match-winning players finally coming on to their game.

Albion's position looks perilous and certainly allows no room for complacency. But they are too good to go down.

The Baggies faced another massive test after The Chronicle went to Press on Tuesday with a six-pointer at Craven Cottage against Fulham in front of the Sky TV cameras.

Reports on festive fixtures – see page 51

TALKING POINT

CAN ALBION COPE WITH THEIR DEFENSIVE CRISIS?

As if the Baggies were not in enough trouble at the back before the weekend, their problems deepened on Saturday with two more men limping off injured.

Pablo Ibanez and Steven Reid will both miss tomorrow's trip to Fulham, where the sidelined Jonas Olsson will still be unavailable and Gabriel Tamas absent through suspension.

Chile's Gonzalo Jara is back from his own ban and he could find himself pressed into action in his international position of centre-back.

But with Abdoulaye Meite totally out of favour and form, Albion are stretched to the limit at the back.

Next two games…

READING (A) SATURDAY (FAC3)

Last season's fiery FA Cup tie between the Baggies at the Royals will add extra spice to this year's third-round clash. Expect the squad to be used to its full.

BLACKPOOL (H) JAN 15

Revenge will be in the Baggies' minds when the Seasiders arrive at The Hawthorns looking to repeat their controversial win over nine-man Albion at Bloomfield Road.

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College re-opens 5th January

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NATALIE LAUNCHES SUCCESSFUL BEAUTY CAREER

Delaying her acting ambitions has paid off for former beauty therapy student Natalie Corns, who came to college with a full set of A levels.
The 20-year-old has cruised to a career on board Steiner ships after completing her Beauty NVQ Level 2 and 3.
She says: "I didn't know whether to go to university, as I wanted to do acting.
"The help and support I have had here has been really good. I'm pleased I came here. It has been ideal and I will now get more work experience."

SPORTS STUDIES

Successful sports student Leon Campbell has achieved his goal of working for the Albion Foundation as a casual coach.
Thanks to the Foundation and Skills Active's 'Get Into The Game' project, Leon soon went from having no job to being offered a coaching role and securing a full-time college place.
He is now studying for a BTEC National Extended Diploma in Sports Development, Coaching and Training, and was recently presented with a £100 bursary by WBA keeper Boaz Myhill at The Hawthorns.

Leon gets his bursary from Boaz Myhill

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Call for details or come to the Open Events.

AVENT ENGINEERS A NEW CAREER

A few technical language problems at the beginning of his Manufacturing Engineering HNC programme soon proved no barrier for Avent Yimbo. Avent had already achieved an Engineering Studies Baccalaureate from his native Congo.
He worked hard to complete his HNC and was accepted by the University of Wolverhampton as a second year Mechanical Engineering degree student in July.
Applied Technology Team Leader Rod Harsburgh says: "With the support of Sandwell College staff Avent settled into the course and became a valuable member of the group. We wish him success for the future."

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- Children's Care, Learning and Development Level 3
- Diploma in Child Care and Education Level 3
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- Certificate in Engineering and Technology Level 1
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- GCSE Science
- Diploma in Hairdressing Level 2
- Award in Using ICT
- Award in IT User Skills (ITQ) Level 1
- Introductory Diploma for IT & Work Level 1
- Introductory Diploma in Health and Social Care Level 1
- First Diploma in Health and Social Care Level 2
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When completed, the new college will include an automotive centre, beauty and hairdressing salons, computer suites, construction workshops, engineering laboratories, fashion and photography studios, a sports hall and a theatre. Trainee Dental Nurses will practise in an imitation surgery, while Travel & Tourism students will train in a mock-up aircraft cabin.

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- Interactive Media
- ITQ
- Office Administration
- Performing Arts
- Photography
- Photography HND
- Public Services - Uniformed
- Skills for Life and Work
- Sports Studies
- Sports Apprenticeships
- Travel & Tourism

Smethwick

- BTEC and GNVQ
- CNC
- Carpentry & Joinery
- Childcare
- CLAIT
- Community Health & Social Care - Foundation Degree
- Computer Animation
- Computer Games Design
- Computer Systems Management - Foundation Degree
- Computing
- Early Years Services - Foundation Degree
- ECDL Advanced
- Engineering
- Electronics
- Employability skills
- ESOL
- Health and Social Care
- Literacy and numeracy
- ITQ
- Manufacturing Engineering HNC
- Mentoring in the Workplace
- Microsoft Office Specialist
- Office Administration
- Painting & Decorating
- Paramedics
- Plastering
- Plumbing
- Skills for Life and Work
- Stem IT
- Tiling
- Teacher Education
- Web Design

Oldbury

- Automotive Apprenticeships
- Customer Services Apprenticeships
- Motor Vehicle / Light Vehicle / Body Repair
- Motorsports
- Dental Nursing Apprenticeships
- Dental Practice Management
- Dental Radiography
- Health and Social Care Apprenticeships
- Pharmacy Apprenticeships
- Sports Apprenticeships
- Team Leading Apprenticeships
- What Next?

For course information and all enquiries: freephone

0800 622006

www.sandwell.ac.uk

College re-opens 5th January

Sandwell College

We're building for your future